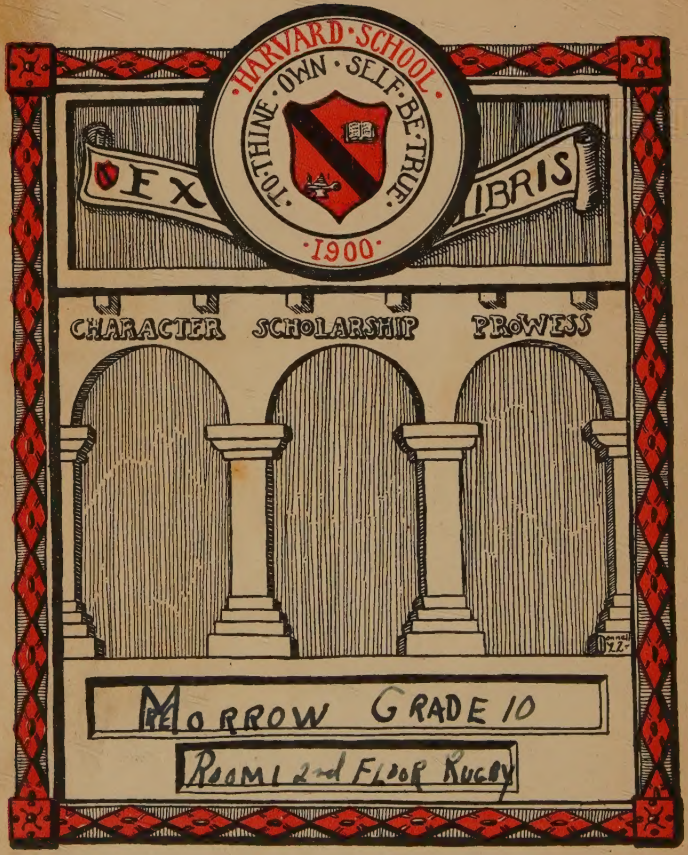
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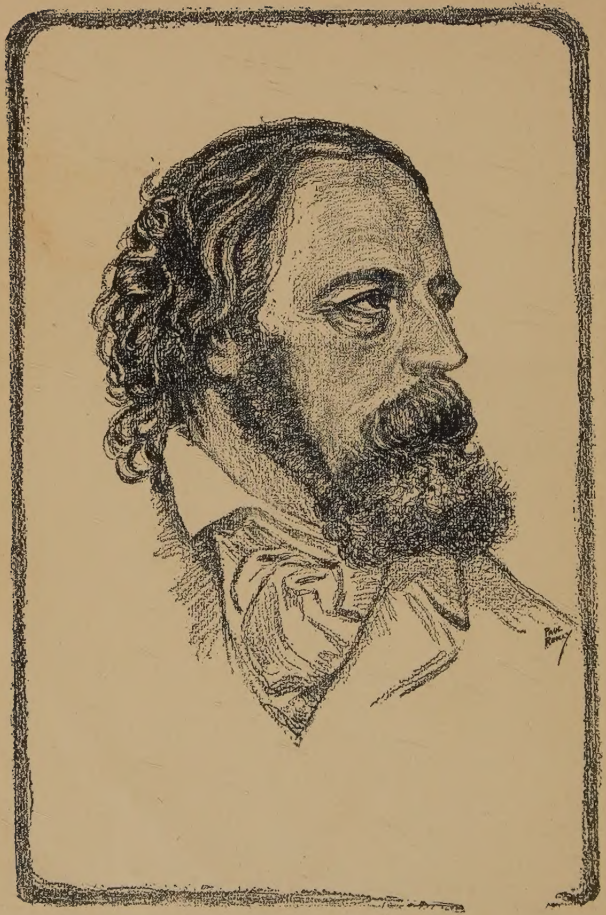

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

TENNYSON'S

THE COMING OF ARTHUR
GARETH AND LYNETTE
LANCELOT AND ELAINE
QUEST OF THE HOLY GRAIL
PASSING OF ARTHUR

EDITED
WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY

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PREFACE

The five idylls included in this volume are those selected by the National Conference on Uniform Entrance Requirements in English as a basis for the examinations in 1915–1919.

The aim of the editor has been threefold: to edit fully without the appearance of pedantry; to give the pupils such an introduction to the Arthurian romances as seems necessary for a complete understanding of these special idylls; to make the learner a sympathetic reader of Tennyson. The text of the Globe edition of the poet's works has been followed in all respects. In annotating, the Century Dictionary has been used for definitions. The editor has made frequent use of Malory's *Le Morte Darthur* whenever a quotation would make a passage clearer. He is also indebted to Dr. J. Scott Clark's *Study of English and American Poets* for some short quotations used in the Introduction.

In the matter of interpretation a paper in the *Contemporary Review* for January, 1870, and one in the same review for May, 1873, were found helpful; but the editor is most largely indebted to the present Lord Tennyson, whose *Memoir* of his father is an invaluable aid in a study of the *Idylls*. This *Memoir* was prepared under the eye of the poet himself. It contains a history of almost every poem and interpretations of many. The explanation of the allegory of the *Idylls*, as given in the Introduction to this volume, is quoted by Lord Hallam Tennyson as that of his father.

In order to interpret the music and the spirit of a poet it is necessary to understand his art form. Tennyson was a master

of blank verse. The editor has therefore given several pages to a discussion of the mechanism of Tennyson's blank verse. In his definitions of the kinds of poetry and in his classification of the poems mentioned he has been to some extent guided by Dr. Gummere's *Handbook of Poetics*. The method of scansion suggested, however, is his own, formed from ideas gathered from many sources after a long experience as a teacher of poetry. Teachers will find that a thorough understanding of some such method will aid the learner in the appreciation of poetry.

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INTRODUCTION

ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

"If a man were permitted to make all the ballads of a nation, he need not care who should make the laws." For more than fifty years Alfred Tennyson wrote songs for the English-speaking peoples, and his poetry had an ever-increasing effect on the laws and on the manners and customs of his countrymen. With the inspiration of a seer or prophet he outlined a poet's solution of political, social, and moral questions, and his persuasive utterances produced action and led to permanent reform.

Alfred Tennyson was born at Somersby in Lincolnshire. His father, the Rev. George Clayton Tennyson, as the elder of two sons, was naturally the heir to an estate called Bayons Manor; but through some caprice of fortune he had been disinherited. The condition of the family was thus one of forced content with a fairly good income from three church livings — Somersby, Benniworth, and Great Grimsby. The parsonage was not a lonely place, however, for in less than fourteen years there came into it twelve children, — eight boys and four girls. The first-born died in infancy, leaving Alfred as the third boy in this family of eleven, all of whom lived to an advanced age.

Born August 6, 1809

At seven years of age Alfred was sent to a grammar school at Louth, where he remained for four years under "a tempestuous, flogging master of the old stamp." He had a sensitive, poetic nature, and his companions were rough and even cruel; so these were unhappy years. Then he returned to his home

to study with his father, who was an excellent language scholar. Thus passed the formative years of his life, with his ten brothers and sisters, the oldest thirteen and the youngest a mere babe. The boys played at tournament when they were in the field. In the house they wrote stories and composed verses to be read at the dinner table. Even then, it is remembered, Alfred was the most expert, his stories being often literary and dramatic. It was a poetic family. The father, who wrote poetry, was a severe though sympathetic critic; and under his direction Alfred received lessons that tended to shape his style and improve his art. At eight years of age he wrote blank verse; before he was thirteen he had written an epic poem of six thousand lines. Such was the merit of his verses that his father exclaimed, "If Alfred die, one of the greatest poets will have gone." The climax of this period was reached when the volume of poems entitled *Poems of Two Brothers* appeared. It was, however, the work of three brothers, Frederick, Charles, and Alfred Tennyson. Alfred was then eighteen years old.

Tennyson's early education

Frederick, the oldest living brother, already at Trinity College, Cambridge, had won a university medal for Greek odes when Charles and Alfred entered. Charles soon secured a scholarship by the beauty of his translations. Alfred about the same time won the Chancellor's prize medal for original poems, his subject being *Timbuctoo*. The strong personality of the poet attracted attention. He was six feet tall, broad chested, strong limbed, with deep eyes and an ample forehead crowned with dark wavy hair. Yet his shyness was such that he sought a substitute when summoned to read his prize poem at Commencement. As a member of a society of college men called the "Apostles," however, this shyness left him, and he was always ready to

Tennyson at Cambridge, February, 1828, to February, 1831

recite ballads of his own composition or even to extemporize verses when called on to entertain. "Alfred Tennyson was our hero, the great hero of our day," said Fanny Kemble, the celebrated actress, who used to visit her brother, who also was at Cambridge. In this society of the "Apostles" Tennyson formed lifelong friendships with Milnes (afterward Lord Houghton), Trench (afterward Archbishop), Alford (afterward Dean of Canterbury), Merivale (afterward Dean of Ely), and Hallam, whom he immortalized in *In Memoriam*. In the meetings of this society were discussed all the leading social and political questions of the day. Tennyson preached the onward progress of liberty, while he opposed revolutionary license. In the summer of 1830 there was an insurrection in Spain against the tyranny of the king. Tennyson and Hallam, sympathizing with the insurgents, journeyed to the Pyrenees with money to assist the revolutionists. They succeeded in delivering the money and in escaping the watchfulness of the Spanish authorities. Thus he was willing to act as well as to preach. In this year also appeared his volume of *Poems chiefly Lyrical*. The next year he left Cambridge to begin his life work as poet.

One month after Tennyson's departure from the University his father died, and the care of a large family fell on the young poet, though there was an income sufficiently great to enable them all to live comfortably. For nearly twenty years he studied his art; at times severely criticized, at others receiving his due reward of praise. He was struggling to become the master poet, and full recognition came in the end. The year 1850 is memorable for three events in the poet's life — the publication of *In Memoriam*, his marriage, and the laureateship.

Tennyson in manhood

At Cambridge Tennyson met Arthur Henry Hallam, and the two became warm friends. Though they were competitors in the race for the Chancellor's prize, this made no difference

in their friendship. After Tennyson left the University, Hallam became a frequent visitor at the Tennyson home, and there he met Alfred's sister, Emilia, to whom he became betrothed. Hallam was the most sympathetic critic of Tennyson's poems, and verses seldom passed to the public until they had received the friend's sanction. They twice visited the Continent together, and they were equally concerned in the social and political conditions of the time, meditating and debating great plans of reform. Suddenly the friendship was severed; Hallam died at Vienna on September 15, 1833. He was there with his father. "When Mr. Hallam returned from his daily walk, he saw Arthur asleep as he supposed upon the couch; a blood vessel near the brain had suddenly burst; it was not sleep but death." A letter from Arthur's uncle announced the sad news to Alfred, and the course of the poet's life was changed. In the next two years he produced a small volume of poems, and in 1847 *The Princess* appeared; but the poet was brooding over the death of his friend and over all that death means. In 1850 his great memorial poem, *In Memoriam*, was printed. Stopford Brooke calls it "the most complete, most rounded to a polished sphere, of the longer poems of Tennyson." This poem not only fixed his rank as a poet, but gave him ready money and income sufficient to enable him to consider the subject of marriage.

In Memoriam

Tennyson's brother Charles was married in 1836. Alfred walked into the church with the bride's younger sister, Emily Sarah Sellwood, a slender, beautiful girl of seventeen. They had met six years before, but this second meeting convinced Tennyson that his feeling toward her was more than that of friendship. Very soon an engagement existed between them, but marriage was deferred because of lack of funds. Tennyson's income was small. He and his family lost heavily in an investment. So far away did marriage seem

Tennyson's marriage

that the poet generously gave the woman he loved her freedom. Even with his longings for a better income, when, in 1845, Sir Robert Peel secured for him an annual pension of £200, he accepted it on his own conditions, writing: "I have done nothing slavish to get it. I never even solicited for it by myself or thro' others. It was all done for me without a word or hint from me, and Peel tells me I need not by it be fettered in the public expression of any opinion I choose to take up." When, however, *In Memoriam* was printed, the poet found himself with a bank account of £300 and the promise of a regular income from his poems sufficient to warrant his marriage. On June 13, 1850, Alfred Tennyson and Emily Sellwood became husband and wife. "The peace of God came into my life before the altar when I wedded her," he said in after life; and on another occasion to some of his most intimate friends he remarked, "I have known many women who were excellent, one in one way, another in another way, but this woman is the noblest woman I have ever known." The wedding was followed very closely by the laureateship.

Wordsworth had been poet laureate, but he died in 1850. In November the appointment came to Tennyson, owing, it is asserted, "chiefly to Prince Albert's admiration for *In Memoriam*." Upon receiving the letter announcing that he was the choice of the Queen for the vacant laureateship he wrote two letters, one declining and one accepting, determining to rely on the advice of friends in the matter of mailing the letters. "I have no passion for courts, but a great love of privacy," he wrote to one. He was advised by them not to decline it. This office added about £100 to his annual income. From this time he continued in easy circumstances, with an ever-increasing revenue.

The poet laureate

In 1853 the annual income from Tennyson's books was £500. Two years later he purchased the Farringford house

on the Isle of Wight. This became his permanent home, though in 1868 he built a summer house at Aldworth in Surrey. Many honors now came to him. In 1855 the University of Oxford conferred on him the degree of D.C.L. In a few years he had the honor to decline the lord rectorship of Glasgow University. He had not only kept the friends of his early life, but made new friendships. Prince Albert and Gladstone visited him at Farringford. The Duke of Argyll became a firm friend, and the living authors such as Browning, Carlyle, Ruskin, Thackeray, Fitzgerald, Huxley, Bagehot, and Harrison boasted and valued his companionship. In 1873 Tennyson received a letter from Mr. Gladstone offering a baronetcy from the Queen. In answer he wrote, "I had rather we should remain plain Mr. and Mrs. and that, if it were possible, the title should first be assumed by our son." This did not seem wise and so passed by. Again the next year the offer was renewed through Mr. Disraeli, who was then premier. Tennyson still insisted on asking that the honor be reserved for his son, but as this was contrary to all precedent, the baronetcy passed by him again. Nine years later, through Mr. Gladstone, the Queen made an offer of a peerage. This time the poet was approached with much diplomacy, Mr. Gladstone first suggesting the idea to Tennyson's son. It was while the Tennysons and Gladstones were on a voyage. The son watched his opportunity and opened the subject. Then Mr. Gladstone came and urged the matter on the poet. Tennyson took two or three days to consider the offer; then he said to his son, "By Gladstone's advice I have consented to take the peerage, but for my own part I shall regret my simple name all my life." About this matter Mr. Gladstone wrote the poet's son, "I think that by it we certainly succeeded in decorating the House of Lords, and I think your father will also be pleased with having given, as I believe, some real pleasure to the Queen in the grant of this

Tennyson's prosperity

honor." When Tennyson took his seat in the House of Lords he refused to sit with either party. "He felt that he must be free to vote for that which seemed to him best for the empire." The first bill for which he voted was the Extension of the Franchise. This he held to be a "matter of justice," and he always acted on that principle.

Tennyson's last years and his death, October 6, 1892

Tennyson was in his seventy-fifth year when he attained to the peerage; still he was a very active man. His political utterances were not in the form of speeches to the Lords, but in the form of stirring lyrics — his first as a peer being his poem *Freedom*, published in *Macmillan's Magazine* for December, 1884. About this time, when the Franchise Bill was under discussion, he wrote to Gladstone, who was premier:

> Steersman, be not precipitate in thine act
> Of steering, for the river here, my friend,
> Parts in two channels, moving to one end —
> This goes straight forward to the cataract:
> That streams about the bend;
> But tho' the cataract seem the nearer way,
> Whate'er the crowd on either bank may say,
> Take thou the "bend," 't will save thee many a day.

Tennyson enjoyed the peerage for eight years, working, planning, writing. In his eighty-first year he wrote *Crossing the Bar*. One October day while passing from Aldworth to Farringford he heard the "moaning of the bar," and the poem was written. His wish that it be placed at the end of all editions of his poems has been observed. When he died, a life that had been all music passed away in song; singing, he "crost the bar."

THE POETRY OF TENNYSON

Tennyson's style

De Quincey mentions two elements of literary style — matter and manner. Buffon's well-known definition, "The style is the man himself," adds a third, and a very important one — the personality or individuality of the writer. These three elements may easily be found in the style of Tennyson.

(a) His matter

As to his matter, Stopford Brooke says that "he wrote of the everyday loves and duties of men and women; of the aspirations and trials which are common to all ages and classes." Tennyson's son Hallam relates how the poet was accustomed to meet Carlyle, Thackeray, Dickens, Huxley, and other thoughtful men of all professions and of all degrees of attainment. Their talk would touch largely on politics, philosophy, and especially on the new speculations rife on every side. Upon projects of reform or of the great movements of philanthropy he reflected much. This reflection furnished the matter for his poetry; this matter he molded into art form. *The Princess* offered a poet's solution of the woman question as it stood nearly sixty years ago. *Locksley Hall* represented "young life, its good side, its deficiencies, and its yearnings." Tennyson called *In Memoriam* "The Way of the Soul," and *Maud* a "Drama of the Soul" set in a landscape glorified by love. But the matter of Tennyson's poetry is spiritualized by the personality of the man.

(b) His personality

There must have been something great in Tennyson the man. The Queen received him cordially from time to time. The Prince Consort, the princesses, Gladstone, Huxley, and the Duke of Argyll were visitors at Farringford. A few of the elements of the poet's individuality have been noted by his critics. The great French writer Taine says, "Without being a pedant, he is moral. . . . He speaks

of God and the soul nobly, tenderly, without ecclesiastical prejudice." Canon Farrar says, "Tennyson, though he had his moods of sorrow and perplexity, was an optimist, who had achieved his right to optimism by the fighting down of despair and doubt." Professor Dowden says Mr. Tennyson "has a strong dignity and efficiency of law, and law understood in its widest meaning. Energy nobly controlled, and ordered activity, delight his imagination. Violence, extravagance, immoderate force, the swerving from appointed ends, revolt — these are with Mr. Tennyson the supreme manifestations of evil." And Dr. Van Dyke adds, "His music must thrill us with the conviction that the humblest child of man has a duty, an ideal, a destiny." Throughout his life he allied himself against the cry of "Art for art's sake"; he was "a poet with a message."

(c) His manner

From his earliest attempts Tennyson endeavored to cultivate the highest art of poetic expression. He was accustomed to modify the old adage so that it read, *Poeta nascitur et fit* (the poet is both born and made). Some of his poems were subjected to many changes and several complete revisions. It seemed to be the poet's aim to paint his scenes vividly, to express his thoughts clearly and precisely, to adorn his pages with jewels of thought and figures of beauty, and to give the whole the color of rich romance. There are critics of note, however, who have charged Tennyson with an over-ornateness. Taine says, "He gave them [his poems] too much adornment and polishing; he seemed like an Epicurean in style as well as in beauty." On the other hand, Bagehot asserts that "Tennyson has painted with pure art." Although his style is beset with mannerisms offensive to some, although he reveled in alliteration and delighted in compound words three or four deep, such as "one-day-seen" and "nine-years-fought-for," Tennyson became so skilled in the use of ornamentation that criticism was silenced. The poet proved himself superior to

his critics in artistic judgment and in taste. His own dictum about literary work was, "An artist should get his workmanship as good as he can, and make his work as perfect as possible. A small vessel built on fine lines is likely to float further down the stream of time than a big raft." So he strove to make every verse he composed as artistically correct as he was able to make it.

Three kinds of poetry

The Greeks recognized three kinds of poetry — lyric, epic, and dramatic. Tennyson tried all three. In his early life the lyric element predominated; next "the melody of the lyric is wedded to the sentiment and picture of the idyll." The idyll merges into the epic. There are, too, the mock heroic, *The Princess*, and the monodrama, *Maud*, with their beautiful inter-lyrics; and these lead to the drama. First, then, as a lyric poet.

Tennyson as a lyric poet

Lyric poetry is the artistic expression of the sentiments and emotions; that is, it is subjective. The poet "lets his illumined being o'errun" in music and song. The action of the lyric is usually rapid, the time quick, the verse itself musical. The poet is free to invent forms. Many of Tennyson's lyric measures are wholly his own; while others have been so treated by him as to make them virtually new. Among those which the poet himself admired were that of *The Daisy*, some of the anapestic movements in *Maud*, and the "long-rolling rhythm of his ode *To Virgil*." Alfred Tennyson's contribution to the volume of verse entitled *Poems of Two Brothers* was largely lyric. At Cambridge, in certain college rooms, he would often declaim his own poems and even "improvise verses by the score, full of lyrical passion." In his first volume, *Poems chiefly Lyrical*, "the variety of his lyrical measures" was noted. In the volume of 1842 appeared *St. Agnes' Eve* and *Sir Galahad*, which Stedman pronounces the "purest and highest of all his lyrical pieces." *The Talking Oak* of this

same volume is called the "nonpareil of sustained lyrics in quatrain verse." Throughout his long lifetime the lyric fires continued to burn intensely; for nearly every year gave the world new songs and ballads. What he furnished is usually described in the superlative degree. Landor called his *Hands all Round* "incomparably the best (convivial) lyric in the language." The spirit of English freedom and patriotism breathes through such songs as *Love thou thy land*, *Of old sat Freedom on the heights*, *England and America in 1782*, and *The Charge of the Light Brigade*. The *Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* is the most ambitious of the patriotic lyrics. Stedman says "Few will deny that, taken together, the five melodies — *As through the land*, *Sweet and low*, *The splendor falls on castle walls*, *Home they brought her warrior dead*, and *Ask me no more!* — that these constitute the finest group of songs produced in our century"; and he adds, "the *Bugle Song* seems to many the most perfect English lyric since the time of Shakespeare." The great elegy *In Memoriam* is a chain of lyrics, and *Maud* is more lyric than dramatic. *Crossing the Bar*, written in his eighty-first year, shows the lyric power still unimpaired. In all this work he was cheered and encouraged by Lady Tennyson, who furnished the musical setting for several of his songs and the inspiration for some of his idylls. The idyll, indeed, was the stepping-stone from the lyric to the epic.

The idyll

The word "idyll" means "a little picture." Quiet and homely scenes are fitting subjects for this kind of poety; for "the idyll must be simple, calm, more concerned with situation than with action." Tennyson's short narrative poems giving pictures of simple country life are idylls, and he wrote many of this kind. *The Gardener's Daughter*, *The Miller's Daughter*, and *Godiva* are purely idyllic pieces. In Tennyson's poetry there is no dividing line between the lyric and the idyll and the idyll and the epic. *The Brook* is an idyll containing

an inter-lyric; *The Princess* is a mock heroic poem containing several lyrics and one idyll.

Tennyson's epics

Epic poetry, Dr. Gummere says, is that kind in which the poet himself narrates a story as if he were present. It is simple in construction, yet it admits of the episode and the dialogue. The meter of the lyric may vary with the impulses of thought; that of the epic must be uniform. The lyric deals with the present, the grand epic with the past. The epic enforces no moral although it may hold one in solution. Some of Tennyson's idylls are epics. Such ballads as *The Revenge*, *The Defence of Lucknow*, and *The Voyage of Maeldune* are good examples of the ballad-epic. *Enoch Arden* and *Dora* represent another kind of epic — the simple, touching tale. Tennyson's nearest approach to a grand epic was his *Idylls of the King*. A friend of the poet called this work "Epylls of the King." "According to him they were little epics (not idylls) woven into an epical unity." Still the *Idylls of the King* are idyllic; they "are full of little pictures which show that Tennyson had studied nature at first-hand, and that he understood how to catch and reproduce the most fleeting and delicate expressions of her face." This poem was the growth of nearly half a century. It was late in life when Tennyson turned to the drama as the medium of art expression.

The *Idylls of the King*

Dramatic poetry

"The drama is imitated human action." Dramatic poetry partakes of the nature of both the epic and the lyric; it deals with the past, but represents past actions as actually occurring before our eyes. The basis, then, is epic, but there are the lyric sentiment, action, and fire. Characters live and act before us and speak in our presence. Thus the poetry is heightened by the varying situations. Tennyson was sixty-five years of age when his first play was published. *Queen Mary*, *Harold*, and *Becket* form what he called his "historical trilogy." The poet's idea was to portray the making of England: *Harold* reproduces the great conflict between Danes,

Saxons, and Normans; *Becket* deals with the struggle between the Crown and the Church; *Queen Mary* represents the rise of the individual into freedom. Other dramas are *The Foresters*, *The Cup*, and *The Falcon*. The value of his dramatic work as compared with his other poetry has been questioned.

Tennyson's dramas

In *Maud*, *Locksley Hall*, and other pieces, Tennyson used the monodrama — a form very popular with Browning. When he undertook the drama proper he was prepared for adverse criticism. There have, however, been given two estimates of his dramatic work, as there are two kinds of modern drama — the drama of action and the drama of living. In the one the characters move before our eyes and in an artificial way act their little parts; in the other the characters live before our eyes. The contrast is felt when Shakespeare's Othello is compared with Browning's Luria. Othello talks and acts; Luria says little, acts little, but *lives* the hero. Of course on the stage the drama of action is the more popular. Tennyson's were rather dramas of living. One critic, therefore, says that he is not a true dramatic poet because he has the limitations of his day and generation; he is romantic and not dramatic. Another says: "Tennyson is one of the great voices of modern times. He is thoroughly penetrated with the spirit of the era, and his methods are throughout such as that spirit dictates. His plays are not so much the delineation of great deeds as they are the studies of the motives which lie behind those deeds. . . . Green, the historian of England, says, 'All my researches into the annals of the twelfth century have not given me so vivid a conception of the character of Henry II as was embodied in Tennyson's *Becket*.'" Dr. Van Dyke has expressed the opinion that "it is not too daring to predict that the day is coming when the study of Shakespeare's historical plays will be reckoned no more important to an understanding of English history than the study of Tennyson's trilogy!"

Tennyson as a dramatist

THE *IDYLLS OF THE KING*

Tennyson's *Idylls of the King* has been called the "Epic of Arthur." The Grand Epic may deal with the mythology or the religion of a people, or it may relate the legends that gather about the history of the past. Milton chose for his great epic the theme of "man's first disobedience" and the bringing of "Death into the world," a subject that deeply concerned every human being and enabled him to write a Grand Epic; for a work of great art must have a great subject. Tennyson, combining the legendary with the mythical, embodied in his poem a Christian ideal that makes it also a Grand Epic. The Epic of Arthur is a double allegory; first, as "shadowing Sense at war with Soul"; next, as a poem of "The Year and the Soul."

The "Epic of Arthur"

As the Epic of Arthur the poem is legendary. Arthur was a king of Britain who flourished in that dark and stormy period when, the protecting arm of Rome having been withdrawn, the weakened people were left subject to the inroads of the invading Saxon. In this struggle of Christian against pagan, King Arthur, by uniting the native kings and barons in a confederacy, was able to stand successfully against the incoming Northmen and even to drive them back. Such was his fame that succeeding generations came to hold him in great veneration. As time passed, legends gathered around the name of the great Arthur. For two or three centuries these grew by oral repetition, until, after the eighth century,

The "Arthurian Cycle of Romance"

a monk named Nennius put in Latin a written account of the wars of Arthur, naming the twelve great battles which this king fought and won. In written form this account passed from hand to hand, the stories growing in number and in interest. In one form or another the legends of Arthur found their way across the English Channel. The trouvères of northern France chanted the old

ones and created new. The stories became popular at the court of the Plantagenet kings, eventually forming what has been called the "Arthurian Cycle of Romance." Then through many hands they passed into Middle English and into modern English.

Malory's *Le Morte Darthur*

The edition of the Arthurian legends which most influenced Tennyson was that of Sir Thomas Malory, a knight of the fifteenth century, whose *Le Morte Darthur* was published in 1485. He seems to have added the story of Gareth and Lynette. Though he added little else, "he selected the most interesting things with an almost invariable sureness, though there are one or two omissions; and he omitted the less interesting parts with a sureness to which there are hardly any exceptions at all. He grasped, and this is his great and saving merit as an author, the one central fact of the story — that in the combination of the Quest of the Grail with the loves of Lancelot and Guinevere, lay the kernel at once and the conclusion of the whole matter." Tennyson, however, has made the old legends his own, "restored the idealism, and infused into them a spirit of modern thought and an ethical significance, setting his characters in a rich and varied landscape; as indeed otherwise their archaic stories would not have appealed to the modern world at large."

Preparation for writing the *Idylls*

In 1848 the poet, brooding over the Arthurian romances, made a tour of Cornwall, and eight years later, accompanied by his wife, he visited Wales, where he wandered over the mountains and viewed the scenes so wonderfully reproduced in his verse pictures.

The growth of the *Idylls*

With Tennyson himself the *Idylls* were a growth of nearly half a century. A great poem comes from brooding, and through all these years the brooding process continued. As early as 1832 the poet began to draw on the Arthurian legends for his inspiration to song. First there appeared the lyric, *The Lady of Shalott*, which is only

another version of *Lancelot and Elaine*. The 1842 volume contained *Sir Galahad*, *Sir Launcelot and Queen Guinevere*, and *Morte d'Arthur* (which forms a part of his present *The Passing of Arthur*). The poet was just experimenting; it was not till 1859 that he published the first installment, *Enid*, *Vivien*, *Elaine*, *Guinevere*. Then followed a rest of ten years, after which (1869) a volume appeared containing *The Coming of Arthur*, *The Holy Grail*, *Pelleas and Ettarre*, and *The Passing of Arthur*. In 1871 *The Last Tournament* was privately printed and then published in the *Contemporary Review;* republished with *Gareth and Lynette* in 1872. These with *Balin and Balan* (published in 1885) make up the twelve books.

The complete epic as finally arranged consists of a *Dedication to Prince Albert*, an epilogue *To the Queen*, and the *Idylls* in three parts — *The Coming of Arthur*, *The Round Table*, and *The Passing of Arthur*. *The Round Table* consists of ten idylls, the names of which have already been mentioned.

The plot

The main action of the plot is the criminal love of Lancelot and Guinevere working to overthrow the unsuspecting goodness of King Arthur. While each of the idylls of *The Round Table* has an interest of its own, every one bears upon this main action, and by suggestion, by assertion, and by foreshadowing helps to work the solution of the problem of virtue. Though virtue seems to fail, the poet has given his own interpretation to his theme in the words:

> "The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
> And God fulfils himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world. . . ."

A double allegory

As for the meaning of the poem, Lord Tennyson would affirm, "Poetry is like shot-silk with many glancing colors. Every reader must find his own interpretation according to his ability, and according to his sympathy with the poet." Readers who have most sympathy with

the poet have found in the *Idylls of the King* a double allegory; it is an epic of "The Year," and also a poem of "Sense at war with Soul."

The epic of "The Year"

As we read the poem, "we go from the marriage of spring in *The Coming of Arthur*, when the blossom of the May seems to spread its perfume over the whole scene, to the early summer of the honeysuckle in *Gareth*, the quickly following mowing-season of *Geraint*, and the sudden summer-thunder-shower of *Vivien* — thence to the full summer of *Elaine*, with oriel casements standing wide for heat — and later, to the sweep of equinoctial storms and broken weather of *The Holy Grail*. Then come the autumn roses and branches of *Pelleas*, and in *The Last Tournament* the close autumn-tide, with all its slowly mellowing avenues, through which we see Sir Tristram riding to his doom. In *Guinevere* the creeping mists of coming winter pervade the picture, and in *The Passing of Arthur* we come to deep winter on the frozen hills: — and the end of all, on the year's shortest day (taken as the end of the year) — that day when the great light of heaven burned at his lowest in the rolling year. The King, who first appears on the night of the New Year, disappears into the dawning light of the new sun bringing the New Year, and thus the whole action of the poem is comprised precisely within the limits of the one principal and ever-recurring cycle of time." In *Gareth* the joy of life "lives in the eternal youth of goodness. But in the later idylls the allowed sin not only poisons the spring of life in the summer, but spreads its poison through the whole community."

"If epic unity is looked for in the 'Idylls' we find it not in the wrath of an Achilles, nor in the wanderings of Ulysses, but in the unending war of humanity in all ages, — the world-wide war of Sense and Soul, typified in individuals, with the subtle interaction of character upon character, the central dominant

figure being the pure, generous, tender, brave, human-hearted Arthur. . . . The great resolve (to ennoble and spiritualize mankind) is kept so long as all work in obedience to the highest and holiest law within them." A single sin intrudes and is allowed to remain; but "in some natures, even among those who would 'rather die than doubt,' it breeds suspicion and want of trust in God and man. Some royal souls are wrought to madness against the world. Others, and some among the highest intellects, become the slaves of the evil which is at first half-disdained. Tender natures sink under the blight; that which is of the highest is then working their death. And in some, as faith declines, religion turns from practical goodness to superstition:

The epic of "Sense at war with Soul"

"This madness has come on us for our sin."

"These seek relief in selfish spiritual excitement, not remembering that man's duty is to forget self in the service of others, and to let visions come and go, and that so only will they see 'The Holy Thing.' In the Idyll of *Pelleas and Ettarre* selfishness has turned to open crime; it is 'the breaking of the storm'; nevertheless Pelleas still honors his sacred vow to the king and spares the wrong-doers. Whereas in *The Last Tournament* the wrong-doer 'suffers his doom,' and 'is cloven thro' the brain.' We have here the deadly proof of the kinship of all willful sin in murder following adultery in closest relation of cause and consequence, — the prelude of the final act of the tragedy which culminates in the temporary triumph of evil, the confusion of moral order, closing in the great 'Battle of the West.'"

"The whole poem is the dream of man coming into practical life and ruined by one sin. Birth is a mystery and death is a mystery, and in the midst lies the table-land of life, and its struggles and performances. It is not the history of one man or one generation but of a whole cycle of generations."

The Coming of Arthur is a fitting introduction to the Round Table stories. With an effective stroke the poet begins with Guinevere, "the fairest of all flesh on earth." Then in a succession of masterly passages the author leads to the meeting of Guinevere and Sir Lancelot and to the marriage of the King. Among the flowers of April Lancelot rides forth to bring the Queen. Guinevere arrives "among the flowers in May." "The sacred altar blossom'd white with May" when Arthur is married. Then his knights gaze "on all earth's beauty in their Queen." Thus the poet has pictured the background for a grand epic on the well-worn theme of the struggle of evil to overcome good. In this introductory idyll Tennyson introduces his most important personages, characterizing each with just the fault or virtue that grows into a ruling passion: Bellicent is "a loyal sister"; Gawain, "breaking into song . . . ran like a colt"; Modred, the spy, "laid his ear beside the doors and there half-heard" what his mother intended only for Leodogran's ear; Lancelot, "loved and honor'd most" by the King; Bedivere, "bold in heart and act and word" — all have become known to the reader, and the action of each has been suggested. Most important of all, Guinevere and Lancelot have been brought into a close companionship that foreshadows a guilty love. A Queen has been provided for the Round Table, but by the same event the evil that was to undermine Arthur's circle has been planted at court. The reader is prepared for the first Round Table idyll, the story of *Gareth and Lynette.*

The Coming of Arthur

Gareth and Lynette represents spring and the springtime of life. The young man in strength and hope and ambition seeks knighthood. After attaining this, he is granted his first quest when nature is as full of life as the sharp-tongued Lynette. The interpretation of the incident of the "blooming boy" is twofold: Gareth found "Love instead of Death"; and "who knows whether indeed Life be Death and

Gareth and Lynette

Death Life?" The allegorical interpretation is, "Death, though apparently the most formidable antagonist of all, turns out to be no real foe, and his fall ushers in the happier day from underground."

Lancelot and Elaine is seventh in the order of final arrangement of the *Idylls*. The poison of the one sin at Arthur's court has spread, and we see "the piteous early death of innocence and hope resulting from it." Littledale says: "This is perhaps the most *idyllic* of the *Idylls* — and it is in most respects the most touching, as a picture of Elaine's love, 'that never found its mortal close,' and Lancelot's great and guilty passion, 'that marred his face and marked it ere his time.' Tennyson's power of drawing the characters of simple and lovable women is here seen to perfection." It is a hard "task to depict women like Enid and Elaine, fair and lovable beings with all the charm of purity and goodness, but moving steadfastly within the orbit of homely simple duties, and lacking the effect of deviation, the contrast of light and shade, that we see in the lives of less clear-natured women. In delineating these gracious creatures Tennyson stands unrivaled; and in his rare sympathy with such types of womanly purity we may perceive the almost feminine delicacy of his mind." On the other hand, in *Lancelot and Elaine* the poet has given the broadest of hints that the sin of Guinevere is growing. The situation has become so acute that the Queen berates Lancelot for not going with the King to the tournament. Tennyson draws a striking picture of a guilty woman with scorn and fear spurring the man she loves to deeds of deceit. The Queen recognizes that half of the knights are their enemies and talk about "the shameless ones." She catches a gleam of "a vague suspicion" in the King's eyes. "Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with him," she cries. The secret sin has marred the face of Lancelot, and a deep melancholy has settled over him. Even the Lord of Astolat has

Lancelot and Elaine

heard rumors of the evil life at court. In the natural course of events there must come a turning point. The eyes of the King must be opened. By the events of the following idyll, Arthur is made aware of the fact that in his Table Round there are only three knights without fault.

The Holy Grail

The Holy Grail is an awakening to King Arthur and to his entire circle. It is Tennyson's version of the story of Sir Percivale, told in the first person by that knight after he had become a "holy man." In the first five paragraphs the reader is given the legend of the journey of Joseph of Arimathæa with the "holy cup" to Glastonbury. Through the fault of its guardians, the Grail had been snatched away to heaven. With the art of a good story-teller, Tennyson selects a devout woman, with heart as pure as snow, to lead in the purifying of the court of Arthur. The nun, Sir Percivale's sister, was the first to see the Holy Grail. She enlisted her brother-knight in the plan for a general search for the cup. The young Sir Galahad, the "boy-knight," who moved among the Table Round in white armor, became the young nun's messenger and champion. He dared to sit in the enchanted chair and *he* saw the Holy Grail, but it was veiled to all the others. Then Percivale sware a vow to ride "a twelve month and a day in quest of it." Many another knight sware the same vow; and Gawain, true to his nature, louder than the rest; and Lancelot, though burdened with sin sware also; but Modred chose to remain at Camelot. 'T was "on a summer night it came to pass." The search began. In course of time the knights returned to Camelot, each with his own story of adventure. Sir Gawain "found a silk pavilion" with "merry maidens in it," and there he tarried. Sir Lancelot saw the Grail, but it was veiled to such as he. Sir Bors, a kinsman of Lancelot, Sir Percivale, and Sir Galahad saw the holy vessel unveiled. There were three knights at Arthur's court still pure and undefiled by sin.

The Passing of Arthur is the concluding idyll of the poem, yet it was the first one of the series to be written. In the volume of 1842 the largest part of the poem appeared under the title of *Morte d'Arthur*. It is a fitting end to the poem in every way. Arthur received Excalibur from the Lady of the Lake and he returns it to her. Then the barge appears to carry him to the blest Avilion. "The symbolism in this portion of the idyll is less prominent, and the story is told in Homeric simplicity and directness. . . . Arthur's earthly realm may reel back into the beast," and his round table may be dissolved; but his purity is untarnished, his honor is without stain, and the ideal which he has striven to realize has lost none of its inward vitality and significance. As he passes from earth to "vanish into light" he already gives a forecast of his return as the representative of the new chivalry, when he shall come

The Passing of Arthur

With all good things, and war shall be no more.

TENNYSON'S BLANK VERSE

Tennyson "is the creator of a new blank verse, different both from the Elizabethan and from the Miltonic. He has known how to modulate it to every theme, and to elicit a music appropriate to each; attuning it in turn to a tender and lovely grace, as in *The Gardener's Daughter;* to the severe and ideal majesty of the antique, as in *Tithonus;* to meditative thought, as in *The Ancient Sage* or *Akbar's Dream;* to pathetic or tragic tales of contemporary life, as in *Aylmer's Field* or *Enoch Arden;* or to sustained romantic narration, as in the *Idylls*. No [other] English poet has used blank verse with such flexible variety, or drawn from it so large a compass of tones; nor has any maintained it so equally on a high level of excellence."

His blank verse

The artistic and musical blank verse of the *Idylls of the King* is not crystallized into arbitrary forms. The poet takes all the liberties of the musician. Time is the basal element in his verse structure. The movement is quickened or retarded according to the thought. "Don't write so rhythmically," his father said to the boy poet; "break your lines occasionally for the sake of variety." Tennyson, following this suggestion, declared that he was nearer thirty than twenty before he was anything of an artist. While he rigidly conforms to the pentameter line, he gains variety and many delicate shades of effect by using almost every possible mixture of feet. The feet not iambic are called *substituted feet*. He himself tells us how blank verse ought to be made: "The English public think that blank verse is the easiest thing in the world to write, mere prose cut up into five-foot lines; whereas it is one of the most difficult. In a blank verse you can have from three up to eight beats [or accents]; but, if you vary the beats unusually, your ordinary newspaper critic sets up a howl. The varying of the beats, of the construction of the feet, of the emphasis, of the extra-metrical syllables, and of the pauses, helps to make the greatness of blank verse."

Vocabulary for the study of Tennyson's blank verse

In order to discuss this verse with intelligence and appreciation, it is necessary to agree on a vocabulary; such a vocabulary is here suggested. *Meter* is measure. *Verse* is measured language. *A verse* is a single line of measured language. Language is measured by the foot. A *foot* is a combination of two or three syllables, usually containing one accent or more. There are eight kinds of feet found in Tennyson's blank verse: the *iamb*, a foot of two syllables, the second of which is accented, indicated in writing thus (∪ /); the *trochee*, a foot of two syllables, the first of which is accented, indicated (/ ∪); the *spondee*, two syllables, both accented (/ /); the *pyrrhic*, two syllables, neither accented

(⏑ ⏑); the *anapest*, three syllables, the last of which is accented (⏑ ⏑ /); the *dactyl*, three syllables, first accented (/ ⏑ ⏑); the *amphibrach*, three syllables, second accented (⏑ / ⏑); and the *amphimacer*, three syllables, first and last accented (/ ⏑ /). Saintsbury speaks even of the *tribrachs* of Tennyson's idylls. Language to be measured must be rhythmic. Perfect *rhythm* is produced by a regular succession of the same foot or of feet that require equal intervals of time for utterance. The greater swells of a rhythmic movement are produced by a regular succession of verses of equal measure or of verses that require equal intervals of time for utterance. Perfect *blank verse* consists of lines, or verses, which contain five iambic feet and which do not rhyme. (Loosely speaking, rhyme is similarity of sound occurring usually at the end of successive or alternating verses.) Such verse containing five iambic feet is described as *iambic pentameter*. *Scansion* consists of reading verse so as to reproduce its rhythm by indicating the natural beats of the feet, the varying flow of the movement, and the changing pulsations of the thought. In scanning blank verse *do not try to make all the feet iambic; read for the thought and the effect, and allow the accents to fall where they must.* Describe every verse as iambic pentameter, pointing out and naming the substituted feet.

The prevailing verse in the *Idylls of the King* is iambic pentameter, such as the following:

⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
And friend | slew friend | not know|ing whom | he slew;

⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ / ⏑ /
And some | had vi|sions out | of gold|en youth.

The Passing of Arthur, ll. 101, 102

While a surpassing number of verses contain five beats there is almost every possible arrangement of accented and unaccented syllables with reference to one another. Here and hereafter rhythmic stress and not syllabic accent is meant by the word

"accent." In scanning, the syllables of polysyllabic words bearing either primary or secondary word or syllabic accents may have also rhythmic stress. Do not mispronounce words in order to make the rhythm regularly iambic.

Every new arrangement of rhythmic accents produces a new effect. Note the following variations in the kinds of feet used in verse of five rhythmic beats:

Prisoned, | and kept | and coax'd | and whis|tled to.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 14

This may be described as an iambic pentameter verse with a trochee substituted for the first iamb.

He nev|er spake | word of | reproach | to me.

Lancelot and Elaine, l. 124

In this verse the third and fourth feet form a choriambus (a trochee followed by an iamb), and in the following verse a hesitating effect is produced by a double choriambus.

First as | in fear, || step af|ter step, || she stole.

Lancelot and Elaine, l. 340

Till the | High God | behold | it from | beyond.

The Passing of Arthur, l. 16

Described as an iambic pentameter verse with a trochee substituted for the first, a spondee for the second, and a pyrrhic for the fourth iambs.

Meeker | than an|y child | to a | rough nurse.

Lancelot and Elaine, l. 852

Note the jarring effect produced by the pyrrhic followed by the spondee.

All night | in a | waste land, | where no | one comes.

The Passing of Arthur, l. 370

And there, | that day | when the | great light | of heaven.

The Passing of Arthur, l. 90

Southward | they set | their fa|ces. The | birds made.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 179

Rapidly and lightly gliding effects are produced by the introduction of extra syllables. The five-accent lines may have eleven or twelve syllables like the following:

In ev|er-high|ering ea|gle-cir|cles up.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 21

And Ga|reth went, | and hov|ering round | her chair.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 33

That smells | a foul-|flesh'd ag|aric | in the holt.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 729

For this | an Eagle, | a roy|al Ea|gle, laid.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 44

Anon, | the whole | fair city | had dis|appear'd.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 193

Then I | so shook | him in | the saddle, | he said.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 29

An I | could climb | and lay | my hand | upon it.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 50

Here the last foot is an amphibrach, and in the next verse the last foot is an amphimacer, a foot rarely found at the end of a line.

At times | the sum|mit of | the high | city flash'd.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 189

Milder | than an|y mother | to a | sick child.

Lancelot and Elaine, l. 853

This verse is described as an iambic pentameter verse with a trochee substituted for the first, an amphibrach for the third, a pyrrhic for the fourth, and a spondee for the fifth iambs.

To weary | her ears | with one | contin|uous prayer.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 19

This and the following two verses have five accents and twelve syllables.

Immingled | with Heav|en's a|zure wav|eringly.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 914

Melody | on branch, | and melo|dy in | mid air.

Gareth and Lynette, l. 180

This verse, with its dactyl and iamb and amphibrach and pyrrhic and spondee, reproduces the melody of the lark or of the thrush.

Verses of three beats are of rare occurrence, but those of four accents are found with greater frequency. Rapidity of movement is gained by lessening the number of accented syllables; and often the movement is lightened by the introduction of extra syllables, eleven and twelve not being uncommon.

And the | long glo|ries of | the win|ter moon.

The Passing of Arthur, l. 360

Burn'd at | his low|est in | the roll|ing year.

The Passing of Arthur, l. 91

Look in | upon | the battle; | and in | the mist.

The Passing of Arthur, l. 104

And let | the story | of her dol|orous | voyage.

Lancelot and Elaine, l. 1332

In verses of six and seven accents, the added beats produce emphasis or the effect of harshness, impressiveness, stateliness, solemnity, or kindred tones. With the normal number of syllables, the effect is very marked.

Shrill, chill, | with flakes | of foam. | He, step|ping down.

The Passing of Arthur, l. 217

Down the | long tow|er-stairs, | hesi|tating.

Lancelot and Elaine, l. 341

Note the hesitating of this verse and the slow tread of the following:

And so | strode back | slow to | the wound|ed King.

The Passing of Arthur, l. 280

Like this | last, dim, | weird bat|tle of | the west.

The Passing of Arthur, l. 94

Note the solemn weirdness produced in this verse by the five successive accents and the emphasis produced in the following verses by the distribution of the accents:

He is | all fault | who hath | no fault | at all.

Lancelot and Elaine, l. 132

Good moth|er is | bad moth|er un|to me!

Gareth and Lynette, l. 16

Needs must | be less|er like|lihood, | noble lord.

Lancelot and Elaine, l. 365

A dead | hush fell; | but when | the dol|orous day.
The Passing of Arthur, l. 122

And with mine | own hand | give his | diamond | to him.
Lancelot and Elaine, l. 755

For I, | being | simple, | thought to work | His will.
The Passing of Arthur, l. 22

'Thou hast half | prevail'd | against | me,' said | so — he.
Gareth and Lynette, l. 30

Muttering | and mur|muring at | his ear, | 'Quick, quick!
The Passing of Arthur, l. 347

The following verses, which contain seven accents, are still more weighty or imposing.

'Hearest | thou this | great voice | that shakes | the world.
The Passing of Arthur, l. 139

Ran to her, | and lo! | the blood-|red light | of dawn.
Lancelot and Elaine, l. 1018

Stay, my | best son! | ye are yet | more boy | than man.'
Gareth and Lynette, l. 97

Were it well | to o|bey then, | if a king | demand.
The Passing of Arthur, l. 263

The art of a great writer of blank verse is marked by skill in the use of the cesura. This is a pause that usually comes about the middle of a line; but in blank verse it may occur after any one of the ten syllables, or there may be two in the same line. By a careful arrangement of this pause, not only is monotony

avoided, but a phrasal-rhythmic effect that is pleasing is produced. Tennyson exercised great skill in the use of the cesura. The last line quoted will illustrate his use of this pause for phrasing effect.

Were it well || to obey then || if a king demand.

Thus all the lights and shades and variations of tone and voice and color are reproduced by the art of Tennyson. Nature is made to teem with life and to sparkle with beauty.

REFERENCES

The student will find the following books and papers of value in an appreciative and sympathetic study of the *Idylls of the King*.

Alfred Lord Tennyson: a Memoir by his Son.

Tennyson: His Art and Relation to Modern Life, by the Reverend Stopford A. Brooke.

Tennyson's Idylls of the King, edited by William J. Rolfe.

The Poetry of Tennyson, by the Reverend Henry Van Dyke.

The Growth of the Idylls of the King, by Richard Jones, Ph.D.

Essays on Tennyson's Idylls of the King, by Harold Littledale.

Le Morte Darthur, by Sir Thomas Malory.

"The Idylls of the King," by Henry (Dean) Alford, *Contemporary Review*, January, 1870.

"The Meaning of Mr. Tennyson's King Arthur," *Contemporary Review*, May, 1873.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

	Tennyson		Contemporary Biography		Contemporary Literature		Contemporary History
1809	Born at Somersby, Aug. 6.	1809	Darwin, Gladstone, Holmes, and Lincoln born.	1809	Irving, *Knickerbocker's History of New York.*		
				1810	Scott, *Lady of the Lake.*		
		1811	Thackeray born.			1811	Napoleon at the height of his power.
		1812	Dickens born.	1812	Byron, *Childe Harold.*	1812	War between the United States and England.
						——	Burning of Moscow.
		1813	Wagner born.				
		1814	Millet born.			1814	First locomotive.
						——	Louis XVII in France.
		1815	Bismarck born.			1815	Battle of Waterloo.
1816	Sent to Louth to school.			1816	Bryant, *Thanatopsis.*		
				——	Byron, *Prisoner of Chillon.*		
				1818	Irving, *Sketch Book.*		
				——	Keats, *Endymion.*		
		1819	George Eliot born.	1819	Scott, *Ivanhoe.*		
		——	Ruskin born.				
1820	Returns to Somersby.	1820	Jenny Lind born.	1820	Keats, *Eve of St. Agnes, Hyperion.*	1820	George IV in England.
		——	Spencer born.				
		1821	Keats died.	1821	Cooper, *The Spy.*		
				——	De Quincey, *Confessions of an English Opium-Eater.*		

		1822	Pasteur born.				
		——	Shelley died.				
		——	Matthew Arnold born.				
		1824	Byron died.			1824	First railroad.
		1825	T. H. Huxley born.			1825	Nicholas I in Russia.
				1826	Cooper, *Last of the Mohicans.*		
1827	*Poems by Two Brothers.*	1827	Beethoven died.				
1828	Enters Trinity College.	1828	Schubert died.				
1829	Wins Chancellor's medal with *Timbuctoo.*	1829	Rubinstein born.				
1830	*Poems chiefly Lyrical.*					1830	Revolution in France.
1832	Tour of the Rhine district.	1832	Goethe died.			1832	Reform Bill in England.
——	*Poems.*	——	Scott died.				
		1834	Coleridge died.				
1837	Removed to High Beech.			1837	Hawthorne, *Twice-Told Tales.*	1837	Victoria in England.
				——	Emerson, *The American Scholar.*		
				1838	Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby.*		
						1839	Photography.
1840	Went to Tunbridge Wells.					1840	Penny postage in England.
1841	Removed to Boxley.						
1842	*Poems.*						
		1844	Thorwaldsen died.	1845	Poe, *The Raven.*		
1847	*The Princess.*			1847	Longfellow, *Evangeline.*		
				1848	Lowell, *Biglow Papers* and *Vision of Sir Launfal.*		
		1849	Poe died.	1849	Ruskin, *Seven Lamps of Architecture.*		
				——	Irving, *Life of Goldsmith.*		
1850	*In Memoriam.*	1850	Wordsworth died.				

	Tennyson		Contemporary Biography		Contemporary Literature		Contemporary History
1850	Laureateship accepted.						
——	Married to Emily Sellwood.						
		1851	Cooper died.				
1852	*Ode to Wellington.*	1852	Webster died.	1852	Thackeray, *Henry Esmond.*	1852	Napoleon III in France.
		——	Wellington died.				
						1853–6	Crimean War.
				1854	Longfellow, *Hiawatha.*		
1855	*Charge of the Light Brigade.*			1855	Kingsley, *Westward Ho.*		
——	Received a Doctorship from Oxford.						
——	*Maud and other Poems.*						
		1856	Heine died.				
						1857	Sepoy Mutiny.
				1858	Holmes, *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.*		
				——	Dickens, *Tale of Two Cities.*		
1859	Purchased Farringford home.	1859	Macaulay died.	1859	Eliot, *Adam Bede.*		
——	*Idylls of the King.*	——	De Quincey died.	——	Irving, *Life of Washington.*		
				1860	Hawthorne, *Marble Faun.*		
		1861	E. B. Browning died.	1861	Eliot, *Silas Marner.*	1861	Civil War in U. S.
		1863	Thackeray died.				
1864	*Enoch Arden.*	1864	Hawthorne died.				
		1865	Lincoln assassinated.	1865	Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies.*		
				1866	Whittier, *Snow-Bound.*		
		1867	Faraday died.				

1868	Builds home near Haslemere.	1868	Rossini died.				
1869	*The Holy Grail.*			1869	Browning, *Ring and the Book.*		
		1870	Dickens died.			1870	Franco-Prussian War.
		1871	J. Herschel died.				
		1873	Agassiz died.				
						1874	Alphonso XII in Spain.
1875	*Queen Mary.*	1875	Millet died.				
1876	*Harold.*						
		1878	Bryant died.				
1880	*Ballads and Poems.*	1880	George Eliot died.				
——	Tour of Venice, Bavaria, and the Tyrol.						
		1881	Carlyle died.				
		1882	Darwin died.				
		——	Emerson died.				
		——	Longfellow died.				
		1883	Wagner died.	1883	Stevenson, *Treasure Island.*		
1885	*Tiresias and other Poems.*	1885	Hugo died.				
1886	*Locksley Hall Sixty Years After.*			1886	Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.*		
1887	Visits Devonshire and Cornwall.	1887	Jenny Lind died.			1887	Sadi Carnot, President of France.
1889	*Demeter and other Poems.*						
1892	*Robin Hood.*						
——	Died at Aldworth, Oct. 6.						

IDYLLS OF THE KING

LORD TENNYSON'S FINAL ARRANGEMENT

Dedication
The Coming of Arthur
The Round Table
- Gareth and Lynette
- The Marriage of Geraint
- Geraint and Enid
- Balin and Balan
- Merlin and Vivien
- Lancelot and Elaine
- The Holy Grail
- Pelleas and Ettarre
- The Last Tournament
- Guinevere

The Passing of Arthur
To the Queen

THE IDYLLS

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

GARETH AND LYNETTE

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

QUEST OF THE HOLY GRAIL

PASSING OF ARTHUR

KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE

"BEDIVERE — 'First made and latest left of all the knights';
LANCELOT — 'His warrior whom he loved and honor'd most';
GAWAIN — 'A reckless and irreverent knight was he';
MODRED — 'Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom'
GARETH — 'Underwent the sooty yoke of kitchen-vassalage';
KAY — 'No mellow master of the meats and drinks';
GERAINT — 'A tributary prince of Devon,' married to Enid;
BALIN — 'The Savage'; and Balan, his brother;
PERCIVALE — 'Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd The Pure';
GALAHAD — 'But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail';
BORS — 'A square-set man and honest,' of Lancelot's kin;
PELLEAS — 'Of the isles,' enamored of Ettarre;
TRISTRAM — 'Of the Woods,' slain by Mark, Isolt's husband."

Rowe

IDYLLS OF THE KING

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

Leodogran, the King of Cameliard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other child;
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight.

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land;
And still from time to time the heathen host
Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was left.
And so there grew great tracts of wilderness,
Wherein the beast was ever more and more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur came.
For first Aurelius lived and fought and died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either fail'd to make the kingdom one.
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thro' the puissance of his Table Round,
Drew all their petty princedoms under him,
Their king and head, and made a realm, and reign'd.

And thus the land of Cameliard was waste,
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast therein,
And none or few to scare or chase the beast;
So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and bear

Came night and day, and rooted in the fields,
And wallow'd in the gardens of the King.
And ever and anon the wolf would steal
The children and devour, but now and then,
Her own brood lost or dead, lent her fierce teat
To human sucklings; and the children, housed
In her foul den, there at their meat would growl,
And mock their foster-mother on four feet,
Till, straighten'd, they grew up to wolflike men,
Worse than the wolves. And King Leodogran
Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
And Cæsar's eagle: then his brother king,
Urien, assail'd him: last a heathen horde,
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth with blood,
And on the spike that split the mother's heart
Spitting the child, brake on him, till, amazed,
He knew not whither he should turn for aid.

But — for he heard of Arthur newly crown'd,
Tho' not without an uproar made by those
Who cried, 'He is not Uther's son' — the King
Sent to him, saying, 'Arise, and help us thou!
For here between the man and beast we die.'

And Arthur yet had done no deed of arms,
But heard the call, and came: and Guinevere
Stood by the castle walls to watch him pass;
But since he neither wore on helm or shield
The golden symbol of his kinglihood,
But rode a simple knight among his knights,
And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she saw,
One among many, tho' his face was bare.

But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life
Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and pitch'd
His tents beside the forest. Then he drave
The heathen; after, slew the beast, and fell'd
The forest, letting in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the knight
And so return'd.

For while he linger'd there,
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
Of those great Lords and Barons of his realm
Flash'd forth and into war: for most of these,
Colleaguing with a score of petty kings,
Made head against him, crying: 'Who is he
That he should rule us? who hath proven him
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,
And find nor face nor bearing, limbs nor voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew.
This is the son of Gorloïs, not the King;
This is the son of Anton, not the King.'

And Arthur, passing thence to battle, felt
Travail, and throes and agonies of the life,
Desiring to be join'd with Guinevere;
And thinking as he rode, 'Her father said
That there between the man and beast they die.
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
Up to my throne, and side by side with me?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,
Vext — O ye stars that shudder over me,
O earth that soundest hollow under me,
Vext with waste dreams? for saving I be join'd

To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will, nor work my work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own realm
Victor and lord. But were I join'd with her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten it,
And power on this dead world to make it live.'

Thereafter — as he speaks who tells the tale —
When Arthur reach'd a field-of-battle bright
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the world
Was all so clear about him, that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,
And even in high day the morning star.
So when the King had set his banner broad,
At once from either side, with trumpet-blast,
And shouts, and clarions shrilling unto blood,
The long-lanced battle let their horses run.
And now the Barons and the kings prevail'd,
And now the King, as here and there that war
Went swaying; but the Powers who walk the world
Made lightnings and great thunders over him,
And dazed all eyes, till Arthur by main might,
And mightier of his hands with every blow,
And leading all his knighthood threw the kings
Carádos, Urien, Cradlemont of Wales,
Claudius, and Clariance of Northumberland,
The King Brandagoras of Latangor,
With Anguisant of Erin, Morganore,
And Lot of Orkney. Then, before a voice
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees

To one who sins, and deems himself alone
And all the world asleep, they swerved and brake
Flying, and Arthur call'd to stay the brands
That hack'd among the flyers, 'Ho! they yield!'
So like a painted battle the war stood
Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,
And in the heart of Arthur joy was lord.
He laugh'd upon his warrior whom he loved
And honor'd most. 'Thou dost not doubt me King,
So well thine arm hath wrought for me to-day.'
'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of God
Descends upon thee in the battle-field:
I know thee for my King!' Whereat the two,
For each had warded either in the fight,
Sware on the field of death a deathless love.
And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in man:
Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death.'

Then quickly from the foughten field he sent
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
His new-made knights, to King Leodogran,
Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee well,
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife.'

Whom when he heard, Leodogran in heart
Debating — 'How should I that am a king,
However much he holp me at my need,
Give my one daughter saving to a king,
And a king's son?' — lifted his voice, and called
A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel: 'Knowest thou aught of Arthur's birth?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said,
'Sir King, there be but two old men that know:
And each is twice as old as I; and one
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
King Uther thro' his magic art; and one
Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bleys,
Who taught him magic; but the scholar ran
Before the master, and so far, that Bleys
Laid magic by, and sat him down, and wrote
All things and whatsoever Merlin did
In one great annal-book, where after-years
Will learn the secret of our Arthur's birth.'

To whom the King Leodogran replied,
'O friend, had I been holpen half as well
By this King Arthur as by thee to-day,
Then beast and man had had their share of me:
But summon here before us yet once more
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere.'

Then, when they came before him, the King said,
'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser fowl,
And reason in the chase: but wherefore now
Do these your lords stir up the heat of war,
Some calling Arthur born of Gorloïs,
Others of Anton? Tell me, ye yourselves,
Hold ye this Arthur for King Uther's son?'

And Ulfius and Brastias answer'd, 'Ay.'
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning, spake —
For bold in heart and act and word was he,
Whenever slander breathed against the King —

'Sir, there be many rumors on this head:
For there be those who hate him in their hearts,
Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,
And theirs are bestial, hold him less than man:
And there be those who deem him more than man,
And dream he dropt from heaven: but my belief
In all this matter — so ye care to learn —
Sir, for ye know that in King Uther's time
The prince and warrior Gorloïs, he that held
Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne:
And daughters had she borne him, — one whereof,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent,
Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved
To Arthur, — but a son she had not borne.
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love:
But she, a stainless wife to Gorloïs,
So loathed the bright dishonor of his love,
That Gorloïs and King Uther went to war:
And overthrown was Gorloïs and slain.
Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
Ygerne within Tintagil, where her men,
Seeing the mighty swarm about their walls,
Left her and fled, and Uther enter'd in,
And there was none to call to but himself.
So, compass'd by the power of the King,
Enforced she was to wed him in her tears,
And with a shameful swiftness: afterward,
Not many moons, King Uther died himself,
Moaning and wailing for an heir to rule
After him, lest the realm should go to wrack.
And that same night, the night of the new year,
By reason of the bitterness and grief

That vext his mother, all before his time
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
Deliver'd at a secret postern-gate
To Merlin, to be holden far apart
Until his hour should come; because the lords
Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child
Piecemeal among them, had they known; for each
But sought to rule for his own self and hand,
And many hated Uther for the sake
Of Gorloïs. Wherefore Merlin took the child,
And gave him to Sir Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther; and his wife
Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him with her own;
And no man knew. And ever since the lords
Have foughten like wild beasts among themselves,
So that the realm has gone to wrack: but now,
This year, when Merlin (for his hour had come)
Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the hall,
Proclaiming, "Here is Uther's heir, your king,"
A hundred voices cried, "Away with him!
No king of ours! a son of Gorloïs he,
Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
Or else baseborn." Yet Merlin thro' his craft,
And while the people clamor'd for a king,
Had Arthur crown'd; but after, the great lords
Banded, and so brake out in open war.'

Then while the King debated with himself
If Arthur were the child of shamefulness,
Or born the son of Gorloïs, after death,
Or Uther's son, and born before his time,
Or whether there were truth in anything

Said by these three, there came to Cameliard,
With Gawain and young Modred, her two sons,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Bellicent;
Whom as he could, not as he would, the King
Made feast for, saying, as they sat at meat,

'A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas.
Ye come from Arthur's court. Victor his men
Report him! Yea, but ye — think ye this king —
So many those that hate him, and so strong,
So few his knights, however brave they be —
Hath body enow to hold his foemen down?'

'O King,' she cried, 'and I will tell thee: few,
Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him;
For I was near him when the savage yells
Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat
Crown'd on the daïs, and his warriors cried,
"Be thou the king, and we will work thy will
Who love thee." Then the King in low deep tones,
And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strait vows to his own self,
That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flush'd, and others dazed, as one who wakes
Half-blinded at the coming of a light.

'But when he spake and cheer'd his Table Round
With large, divine, and comfortable words,
Beyond my tongue to tell thee — I beheld
From eye to eye thro' all their Order flash
A momentary likeness of the King:
And ere it left their faces, thro' the cross

And those around it and the Crucified,
Down from the casement over Arthur, smote
Flame-color, vert, and azure, in three rays,
One falling upon each of three fair queens,
Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends
Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright
Sweet faces, who will help him at his need.

'And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit
And hundred winters are but as the hands
Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege.

'And near him stood the Lady of the Lake,
Who knows a subtler magic than his own —
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful.
She gave the King his huge cross-hilted sword,
Whereby to drive the heathen out: a mist
Of incense curl'd about her, and her face
Wellnigh was hidden in the minster gloom;
But there was heard among the holy hymns
A voice as of the waters, for she dwells
Down in a deep; calm, whatsoever storms
May shake the world, and when the surface rolls,
Hath power to walk the waters like our Lord.

'There likewise I beheld Excalibur
Before him at his crowning borne, the sword
That rose from out the bosom of the lake,
And Arthur row'd across and took it — rich
With jewels, elfin Urim, on the hilt,
Bewildering heart and eye — the blade so bright
That men are blinded by it — on one side,
Graven in the oldest tongue of all this world,

" Take me," but turn the blade and ye shall see,
And written in the speech ye speak yourself,
" Cast me away ! " And sad was Arthur's face
Taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him,
" Take thou and strike ! the time to cast away
Is yet far-off." So this great brand the King
Took, and by this will beat his foemen down.'

Thereat Leodogran rejoiced, but thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask'd,
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
' The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own dear sister'; and she said,
' Daughter of Gorloïs and Ygerne am I';
' And therefore Arthur's sister ? ' ask'd the King.
She answer'd, ' These be secret things,' and sign'd
To those two sons to pass, and let them be.
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Sprang out, and follow'd by his flying hair
Ran like a colt, and leapt at all he saw :
But Modred laid his ear beside the doors,
And there half-heard ; the same that afterward
Struck for the throne, and striking found his doom.

And then the Queen made answer, ' What know I ?
For dark my mother was in eyes and hair,
And dark in hair and eyes am I ; and dark
Was Gorloïs, yea and dark was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness ; but this King is fair
Beyond the race of Britons and of men.
Moreover, always in my mind I hear
A cry from out the dawning of my life,

A mother weeping, and I hear her say,
"O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the rough ways of the world."'

'Ay,' said the King, 'and hear ye such a cry?
But when did Arthur chance upon thee first?'

'O King!' she cried, 'and I will tell thee true:
He found me first when yet a little maid:
Beaten had I been for a little fault
Whereof I was not guilty; and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of heath,
And hated this fair world and all therein,
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead; and he —
I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they say, can walk
Unseen at pleasure — he was at my side,
And spake sweet words, and comforted my heart,
And dried my tears, being a child with me.
And many a time he came, and evermore
As I grew greater grew with me; and sad
At times he seem'd, and sad with him was I,
Stern too at times, and then I loved him not,
But sweet again, and then I loved him well.
And now of late I see him less and less,
But those first days had golden hours for me,
For then I surely thought he would be king.

'But let me tell thee now another tale:
For Bleys, our Merlin's master, as they say,
Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To hear him speak before he left his life.
Shrunk like a fairy changeling lay the mage;

And when I enter'd told me that himself
And Merlin ever served about the King,
Uther, before he died; and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil past away
Moaning and wailing for an heir, the two
Left the still King, and passing forth to breathe,
Then from the castle gateway by the chasm
Descending thro' the dismal night — a night
In which the bounds of heaven and earth were lost —
Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape thereof
A dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern
Bright with a shining people on the decks,
And gone as soon as seen. And then the two
Dropt to the cove, and watch'd the great sea fall,
Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,
Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep
And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged
Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame:
And down the wave and in the flame was borne
A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet,
Who stoopt and caught the babe, and cried "The King!
Here is an heir for Uther!" And the fringe
Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,
Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word,
And all at once all round him rose in fire,
So that the child and he were clothed in fire.
And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
Free sky and stars: "And this same child," he said,
"Is he who reigns; nor could I part in peace
Till this were told." And saying this the seer
Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of death,
Nor ever to be question'd any more

Save on the further side; but when I met
Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were truth —
The shining dragon and the naked child
Descending in the glory of the seas —
He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me
In riddling triplets of old time, and said:

'"Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow in the sky!
A young man will be wiser by and by;
An old man's wit may wander ere he die.
Rain, rain, and sun! a rainbow on the lea!
And truth is this to me, and that to thee;
And truth or clothed or naked let it be.
Rain, sun, and rain! and the free blossom blows:
Sun, rain, and sun! and where is he who knows?
From the great deep to the great deep he goes."

'So Merlin riddling anger'd me; but thou
Fear not to give this King thine only child,
Guinevere: so great bards of him will sing
Hereafter; and dark sayings from of old
Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of men,
And echo'd by old folk beside their fires
For comfort after their wage-work is done,
Speak of the King; and Merlin in our time
Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn
Tho' men may wound him that he will not die,
But pass, again to come; and then or now
Utterly smite the heathen underfoot,
Till these and all men hail him for their king.'

She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced,
But musing 'Shall I answer yea or nay?'

Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept, and saw
Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew,
Field after field, up to a height, the peak
Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king,
Now looming, and now lost; and on the slope
The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was driven,
Fire glimpsed; and all the land from roof and rick,
In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind,
Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with the haze
And made it thicker; while the phantom king
Sent out at times a voice; and here or there
Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest
Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of ours,
No son of Uther, and no king of ours';
Till with a wink his dream was changed, the haze
Descended, and the solid earth became
As nothing, but the King stood out in heaven,
Crown'd. And Leodogran awoke, and sent
Ulfius, and Brastias, and Bedivere,
Back to the court of Arthur answering yea.

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom he loved
And honor'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride forth
And bring the Queen;—and watch'd him from the gates:
And Lancelot past away among the flowers,
(For then was latter April) and return'd
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere.
To whom arrived, by Dubric the high saint,
Chief of the church in Britain, and before
The stateliest of her altar-shrines, the King
That morn was married, while in stainless white,
The fair beginners of a nobler time,
And glorying in their vows and him, his knights

Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy.
Far shone the fields of May thro' open door,
The sacred altar blossom'd white with May,
The Sun of May descended on their King,
They gazed on all earth's beauty in their Queen,
Roll'd incense, and there past along the hymns
A voice as of the waters, while the two
Sware at the shrine of Christ a deathless love:
And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is mine.
Let chance what will, I love thee to the death!'
To whom the Queen replied with drooping eyes,
'King and my lord, I love thee to the death!'
And holy Dubric spread his hands and spake,
'Reign ye, and live and love, and make the world
Other, and may thy Queen be one with thee,
And all this Order of thy Table Round
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their King!'

So Dubric said; but when they left the shrine
Great Lords from Rome before the portal stood,
In scornful stillness gazing as they past;
Then while they paced a city all on fire
With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets blew,
And Arthur's knighthood sang before the King:—

'Blow trumpet, for the world is white with May;
Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd away!
Blow thro' the living world — "Let the King reign."

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in Arthur's realm?
Flash brand and lance, fall battleaxe upon helm,
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

'Strike for the King and live! his knights have heard
That God hath told the King a secret word.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.

'Blow trumpet! he will lift us from the dust.
Blow trumpet! live the strength and die the lust!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

'Strike for the King and die! and if thou diest,
The King is King, and ever wills the highest.
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

'Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May!
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let the King reign.

'The King will follow Christ, and we the King
In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the King reign.'

So sang the knighthood, moving to their hall.
There at the banquet those great Lords from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
Strode in, and claim'd their tribute as of yore.
But Arthur spake, 'Behold, for these have sworn
To wage my wars, and worship me their King;
The old order changeth, yielding place to new;
And we that fight for our fair father Christ,
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old
To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,
No tribute will we pay': so those great lords
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and thro' that strength the King
Drew in the petty princedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign'd.

GARETH AND LYNETTE

The last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,
And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring
Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted Pine
Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl'd away.
'How he went down,' said Gareth, 'as a false knight
Or evil king before my lance if lance
Were mine to use — O senseless cataract,
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy —
And yet thou art but swollen with cold snows
And mine is living blood: thou dost His will,
The Maker's, and not knowest, and I that know,
Have strength and wit, in my good mother's hall
Linger with vacillating obedience,
Prison'd, and kept and coax'd and whistled to —
Since the good mother holds me still a child!
Good mother is bad mother unto me!
A worse were better; yet no worse would I.
Heaven yield her for it, but in me put force
To weary her ears with one continuous prayer,
Until she let me fly discaged to sweep
In ever-highering eagle-circles up
To the great Sun of Glory, and thence swoop
Down upon all things base, and dash them dead,
A knight of Arthur, working out his will,
To cleanse the world. Why, Gawain, when he came
With Modred hither in the summer-time,
Ask'd me to tilt with him, the proven knight.

Modred for want of worthier was the judge.
Then I so shook him in the saddle, he said,
"Thou hast half prevail'd against me," said so — he —
Tho' Modred biting his thin lips was mute,
For he is alway sullen: what care I?'

And Gareth went, and hovering round her chair
Ask'd, 'Mother, tho' ye count me still the child,
Sweet mother, do ye love the child?' She laugh'd,
'Thou art but a wild-goose to question it.'
'Then, mother, and ye love the child,' he said,
'Being a goose and rather tame than wild,
Hear the child's story.' 'Yea, my well-beloved,
An 't were but of the goose and golden eggs.'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling eyes,
'Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of mine
Was finer gold than any goose can lay;
For this an Eagle, a royal Eagle, laid
Almost beyond eye-reach, on such a palm
As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours.
And there was ever haunting round the palm
A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw
The splendor sparkling from aloft, and thought
"An I could climb and lay my hand upon it,
Then were I wealthier than a leash of kings."
But ever when he reach'd a hand to climb,
One that had loved him from his childhood, caught
And stay'd him, "Climb not lest thou break thy neck,
I charge thee by my love," and so the boy,
Sweet mother, neither clomb, nor brake his neck,
And brake his very heart in pining for it,
And past away.'

To whom the mother said,
'True love, sweet son, had risk'd himself and climb'd,
And handed down the golden treasure to him.'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling eyes,
'Gold? said I gold? — ay then, why he, or she,
Or whosoe'er it was, or half the world
Had ventured — *had* the thing I spake of been
Mere gold — but this was all of that true steel,
Whereof they forged the brand Excalibur,
And lightnings play'd about it in the storm,
And all the little fowl were flurried at it,
And there were cries and clashings in the nest,
That sent him from his senses: let me go.'

Then Bellicent bemoan'd herself and said,
'Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness?
Lo, where thy father Lot beside the hearth
Lies like a log, and all but smoulder'd out!
For ever since when traitor to the King
He fought against him in the Barons' war,
And Arthur gave him back his territory,
His age hath slowly droopt, and now lies there
A yet-warm corpse, and yet unburiable,
No more; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks, nor knows.
And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall,
Albeit neither loved with that full love
I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love:
Stay therefore thou; red berries charm the bird,
And thee, mine innocent, the jousts, the wars,
Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang
Of wrench'd or broken limb — an often chance
In those brain-stunning shocks, and tourney-falls,

Frights to my heart; but stay: follow the deer
By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns;
So make thy manhood mightier day by day;
Sweet is the chase: and I will seek thee out
Some comfortable bride and fair, to grace
Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone year,
Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness
I know not thee, myself, nor anything.
Stay, my best son! ye are yet more boy than man.'

Then Gareth, 'An ye hold me yet for child,
Hear yet once more the story of the child.
For, mother, there was once a King, like ours.
The prince his heir, when tall and marriageable,
Ask'd for a bride; and thereupon the King
Set two before him. One was fair, strong, arm'd —
But to be won by force — and many men
Desired her; one, good lack, no man desired.
And these were the conditions of the King:
That save he won the first by force, he needs
Must wed that other, whom no man desired,
A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile,
That evermore she long'd to hide herself,
Nor fronted man or woman, eye to eye —
Yea — some she cleaved to, but they died of her.
And one — they call'd her Fame; and one, — O mother,
How can ye keep me tether'd to you — Shame.
Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.
Follow the deer? follow the Christ, the King,
Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow the King —
Else, wherefore born?'

To whom the mother said,
Sweet son, for there be many who deem him not,
Or will not deem him, wholly proven King —
Albeit in mine own heart I knew him King,
When I was frequent with him in my youth,
And heard him Kingly speak, and doubted him
No more than he, himself; but felt him mine,
Of closest kin to me: yet — wilt thou leave
Thine easeful biding here, and risk thine all,
Life, limbs, for one that is not proven King?
Stay, till the cloud that settles round his birth
Hath lifted but a little. Stay, sweet son.'

And Gareth answer'd quickly, 'Not an hour,
So that ye yield me — I will walk thro' fire,
Mother, to gain it — your full leave to go.
Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd Rome
From off the threshold of the realm, and crush'd
The Idolaters, and made the people free?
Who should be King save him who makes us free?'

So when the Queen, who long had sought in vain
To break him from the intent to which he grew,
Found her son's will unwaveringly one,
She answer'd craftily, 'Will ye walk thro' fire?
Who walks thro' fire will hardly heed the smoke.
Ay, go then, an ye must: only one proof,
Before thou ask the King to make thee knight,
Of thine obedience and thy love to me,
Thy mother, — I demand.'

And Gareth cried,
'A hard one, or a hundred, so I go.
Nay — quick! the proof to prove me to the quick!'

But slowly spake the mother looking at him,
'Prince, thou shalt go disguised to Arthur's hall,
And hire thyself to serve for meats and drinks
Among the scullions and the kitchen-knaves,
And those that hand the dish across the bar.
Nor shalt thou tell thy name to any one.
And thou shalt serve a twelvemonth and a day.'

For so the Queen believed that when her son
Beheld his only way to glory lead
Low down thro' villain kitchen-vassalage,
Her own true Gareth was too princely-proud
To pass thereby; so should he rest with her,
Closed in her castle from the sound of arms.

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied,
'The thrall in person may be free in soul,
And I shall see the jousts. Thy son am I,
And since thou art my mother, must obey.
I therefore yield me freely to thy will;
For hence will I, disguised, and hire myself
To serve with scullions and with kitchen-knaves;
Nor tell my name to any — no, not the King.'

Gareth awhile linger'd. The mother's eye
Full of the wistful fear that he would go,
And turning toward him wheresoe'er he turn'd,
Perplext his outward purpose, till an hour,
When waken'd by the wind which with full voice
Swept bellowing thro' the darkness on to dawn,
He rose, and out of slumber calling two
That still had tended on him from his birth,
Before the wakeful mother heard him, went.

The three were clad like tillers of the soil.
Southward they set their faces. The birds made
Melody on branch, and melody in mid air.
The damp hill-slopes were quicken'd into green,
And the live green had kindled into flowers,
For it was past the time of Easterday.

So, when their feet were planted on the plain
That broaden'd toward the base of Camelot,
Far off they saw the silver-misty morn
Rolling her smoke about the Royal mount,
That rose between the forest and the field.
At times the summit of the high city flash'd;
At times the spires and turrets half-way down
Prick'd thro' the mist; at times the great gate shone
Only, that open'd on the field below:
Anon, the whole fair city had disappear'd.

Then those who went with Gareth were amazed,
One crying, 'Let us go no further, lord.
Here is a city of Enchanters, built
By fairy Kings.' The second echo'd him,
'Lord, we have heard from our wise man at home
To Northward, that this King is not the King,
But only changeling out of Fairyland,
Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery
And Merlin's glamor.' Then the first again,
'Lord, there is no such city anywhere,
But all a vision.'

Gareth answer'd them
With laughter, swearing he had glamor enow
In his own blood, his princedom, youth and hopes,

To plunge old Merlin in the Arabian sea;
So push'd them all unwilling toward the gate.
And there was no gate like it under heaven.
For barefoot on the keystone, which was lined
And rippled like an ever-fleeting wave,
The Lady of the Lake stood: all her dress
Wept from her sides as water flowing away;
But like the cross her great and goodly arms
Stretch'd under all the cornice and upheld:
And drops of water fell from either hand;
And down from one a sword was hung, from one
A censer, either worn with wind and storm;
And o'er her breast floated the sacred fish;
And in the space to left of her, and right,
Were Arthur's wars in weird devices done,
New things and old co-twisted, as if Time
Were nothing, so inveterately, that men
Were giddy gazing there; and over all
High on the top were those three Queens, the friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need.

Then those with Gareth for so long a space
Stared at the figures, that at last it seem'd
The dragon-boughts and elvish emblemings
Began to move, seethe, twine and curl: they call'd
To Gareth, 'Lord, the gateway is alive.'

And Gareth likewise on them fixt his eyes
So long, that ev'n to him they seem'd to move.
Out of the city a blast of music peal'd.
Back from the gate started the three, to whom
From out thereunder came an ancient man,
Long-bearded, saying, 'Who be ye, my sons?'

Then Gareth, 'We be tillers of the soil,
Who leaving share in furrow come to see
The glories of our King: but these, my men,
(Your city moved so weirdly in the mist)
Doubt if the King be King at all, or come
From Fairyland; and whether this be built
By magic, and by fairy Kings and Queens;
Or whether there be any city at all,
Or all a vision: and this music now
Hath scared them both, but tell thou these the truth.'

Then that old Seer made answer playing on him
And saying, 'Son, I have seen the good ship sail
Keel upward, and mast downward, in the heavens,
And solid turrets topsy-turvy in air:
And here is truth; but an it please thee not,
Take thou the truth as thou hast told it me.
For truly as thou sayest, a Fairy King
And Fairy Queens have built the city, son;
They came from out a sacred mountain-cleft
Toward the sunrise, each with harp in hand,
And built it to the music of their harps.
And, as thou sayest, it is enchanted, son,
For there is nothing in it as it seems
Saving the King; tho' some there be that hold
The King a shadow, and the city real:
Yet take thou heed of him, for, so thou pass
Beneath this archway, then wilt thou become
A thrall to his enchantments, for the King
Will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame
A man should not be bound by, yet the which
No man can keep; but, so thou dread to swear,
Pass not beneath this gateway, but abide

Without, among the cattle of the field.
For an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is built
To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever.'

Gareth spake
Anger'd, 'Old Master, reverence thine own beard
That looks as white as utter truth, and seems
Wellnigh as long as thou art statured tall!
Why mockest thou the stranger that hath been
To thee fair-spoken?'

But the Seer replied,
'Know ye not then the Riddling of the Bards?
"Confusion, and illusion, and relation,
Elusion, and occasion, and evasion"?
I mock thee not but as thou mockest me,
And all that see thee, for thou art not who
Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou art.
And now thou goest up to mock the King,
Who cannot brook the shadow of any lie.'

Unmockingly the mocker ending here
Turn'd to the right, and past along the plain;
Whom Gareth looking after said, 'My men,
Our one white lie sits like a little ghost
Here on the threshold of our enterprise.
Let love be blamed for it, not she, nor I:
Well, we will make amends.'

With all good cheer
He spake and laugh'd, then enter'd with his twain
Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces

And stately, rich in emblem and the work
Of ancient kings who did their days in stone;
Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at Arthur's court,
Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and everywhere
At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening peak
And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven.
And ever and anon a knight would pass
Outward, or inward to the hall: his arms
Clash'd; and the sound was good to Gareth's ear.
And out of bower and casement shyly glanced
Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of love;
And all about a healthful people stept
As in the presence of a gracious king.

Then into hall Gareth ascending heard
A voice, the voice of Arthur, and beheld
Far over heads in that long-vaulted hall
The splendor of the presence of the King
Throned, and delivering doom — and look'd no more —
But felt his young heart hammering in his ears,
And thought, 'For this half-shadow of a lie
The truthful King will doom me when I speak.'
Yet pressing on, tho' all in fear to find
Sir Gawain or Sir Modred, saw nor one
Nor other, but in all the listening eyes
Of those tall knights, that ranged about the throne,
Clear honor shining like the dewy star
Of dawn, and faith in their great King, with pure
Affection, and the light of victory,
And glory gain'd, and evermore to gain.

Then came a widow crying to the King,
'A boon, Sir King! Thy father, Uther, reft

From my dead lord a field with violence:
For howsoe'er at first he proffer'd gold,
Yet, for the field was pleasant in our eyes,
We yielded not; and then he reft us of it
Perforce, and left us neither gold nor field.'

Said Arthur, 'Whether would ye? gold or field?'
To whom the woman weeping, 'Nay, my lord,
The field was pleasant in my husband's eye.'

And Arthur, 'Have thy pleasant field again,
And thrice the gold for Uther's use thereof,
According to the years. No boon is here,
But justice, so thy say be proven true.
Accursed, who from the wrongs his father did
Would shape himself a right!'

And while she past,
Came yet another widow crying to him,
'A boon, Sir King! Thine enemy, King, am I.
With thine own hand thou slewest my dear lord,
A knight of Uther in the Barons' war,
When Lot and many another rose and fought
Against thee, saying thou wert basely born.
I held with these, and loathe to ask thee aught.
Yet lo! my husband's brother had my son
Thrall'd in his castle, and hath starved him dead;
And standeth seized of that inheritance
Which thou that slewest the sire hast left the son.
So tho' I scarce can ask it thee for hate,
Grant me some knight to do the battle for me,
Kill the foul thief, and wreak me for my son.'

Then strode a good knight forward, crying to him,
'A boon, Sir King! I am her kinsman, I.
Give me to right her wrong, and slay the man.'

Then came Sir Kay, the seneschal, and cried,
'A boon, Sir King! ev'n that thou grant her none,
This railer, that hath mock'd thee in full hall —
None; or the wholesome boon of gyve and gag.'

But Arthur, 'We sit King, to help the wrong'd
Thro' all our realm. The woman loves her lord.
Peace to thee, woman, with thy loves and hates!
The kings of old had doom'd thee to the flames,
Aurelius Emrys would have scourged thee dead,
And Uther slit thy tongue: but get thee hence —
Lest that rough humor of the kings of old
Return upon me! Thou that art her kin,
Go likewise; lay him low and slay him not,
But bring him here, that I may judge the right,
According to the justice of the King:
Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King
Who lived and died for men, the man shall die.

Then came in hall the messenger of Mark,
A name of evil savor in the land,
The Cornish king. In either hand he bore
What dazzled all, and shone far-off as shines
A field of charlock in the sudden sun
Between two showers, a cloth of palest gold,
Which down he laid before the throne, and knelt,
Delivering, that his lord, the vassal king,
Was ev'n upon his way to Camelot;
For having heard that Arthur of his grace

Had made his goodly cousin, Tristram, knight,
And, for himself was of the greater state,
Being a king, he trusted his liege-lord
Would yield him this large honor all the more;
So pray'd him well to accept this cloth of gold,
In token of true heart and fealty.

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to rend
In pieces, and so cast it on the hearth.
An oak-tree smoulder'd there. 'The goodly knight!
What! shall the shield of Mark stand among these?'
For, midway down the side of that long hall
A stately pile, — whereof along the front,
Some blazon'd, some but carven, and some blank,
There ran a treble range of stony shields, —
Rose, and high-arching overbrow'd the hearth.
And under every shield a knight was named:
For this was Arthur's custom in his hall;
When some good knight had done one noble deed,
His arms were carven only; but if twain
His arms were blazon'd also; but if none,
The shield was blank and bare without a sign
Saving the name beneath; and Gareth saw
The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and bright,
And Modred's blank as death; and Arthur cried
To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth.

'More like are we to reave him of his crown
Than make him knight because men call him king.
The kings we found, ye know we stay'd their hands
From war among themselves, but left them kings;
Of whom were any bounteous, merciful,
Truth-speaking, brave, good livers, them we enroll'd

Among us, and they sit within our hall.
But Mark hath tarnish'd the great name of king,
As Mark would sully the low state of churl:
And, seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold,
Return, and meet, and hold him from our eyes,
Lest we should lap him up in cloth of lead,
Silenced for ever — craven — a man of plots,
Crafts, poisonous counsels, wayside ambushings —
No fault of thine: let Kay the seneschal
Look to thy wants, and send thee satisfied —
Accursed, who strikes nor lets the hand be seen!'

And many another suppliant crying came
With noise of ravage wrought by beast and man,
And evermore a knight would ride away.

Last, Gareth leaning both hands heavily
Down on the shoulders of the twain, his men,
Approach'd between them toward the King, and ask'd,
'A boon, Sir King (his voice was all ashamed),
For see ye not how weak and hungerworn
I seem — leaning on these? grant me to serve
For meat and drink among thy kitchen-knaves
A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my name.
Hereafter I will fight.'

To him the King,
'A goodly youth and worth a goodlier boon!
But so thou wilt no goodlier, then must Kay,
The master of the meats and drinks, be thine.'

He rose and past; then Kay, a man of mien
Wan-sallow as the plant that feels itself
Root-bitten by white lichen,

'Lo ye now! 445
This fellow hath broken from some Abbey, where,
God wot, he had not beef and brewis enow,
However that might chance! but an he work,
Like any pigeon will I cram his crop,
And sleeker shall he shine than any hog.' 450

Then Lancelot standing near, 'Sir Seneschal,
Sleuth-hound thou knowest, and gray, and all the hounds;
A horse thou knowest, a man thou dost not know:
Broad brows and fair, a fluent hair and fine,
High nose, a nostril large and fine, and hands 455
Large, fair and fine! — Some young lad's mystery —
But, or from sheepcot or king's hall, the boy
Is noble-natured. Treat him with all grace,
Lest he should come to shame thy judging of him.'

Then Kay, 'What murmurest thou of mystery? 460
Think ye this fellow will poison the King's dish?
Nay, for he spake too fool-like: mystery!
Tut, an the lad were noble, he had ask'd
For horse and armor: fair and fine, forsooth!
Sir Fine-face, Sir Fair-hands? but see thou to it 465
That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some fine day
Undo thee not — and leave my man to me.'

So Gareth all for glory underwent
The sooty yoke of kitchen-vassalage;
Ate with young lads his portion by the door, 470
And couch'd at night with grimy kitchen-knaves.
And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly,
But Kay the seneschal, who loved him not,
Would hustle and harry him, and labor him

Beyond his comrade of the hearth, and set
To turn the broach, draw water, or hew wood,
Or grosser tasks; and Gareth bow'd himself
With all obedience to the King, and wrought
All kind of service with a noble ease
That graced the lowliest act in doing it.
And when the thralls had talk among themselves,
And one would praise the love that linkt the King
And Lancelot — how the King had saved his life
In battle twice, and Lancelot once the King's —
For Lancelot was the first in Tournament,
But Arthur mightiest on the battle-field —
Gareth was glad. Or if some other told,
How once the wandering forester at dawn,
Far over the blue tarns and hazy seas,
On Caer-Eryri's highest found the King,
A naked babe, of whom the Prophet spake,
'He passes to the Isle Avilion,
He passes and is heal'd and cannot die' —
Gareth was glad. But if their talk were foul,
Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,
Or carol some old roundelay, and so loud
That first they mock'd, but, after, reverenced him.
Or Gareth telling some prodigious tale
Of knights, who sliced a red life-bubbling way
Thro' twenty folds of twisted dragon, held
All in a gap-mouth'd circle his good mates
Lying or sitting round him, idle hands,
Charm'd; till Sir Kay, the seneschal, would come
Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind
Among dead leaves, and drive them all apart.
Or when the thralls had sport among themselves,
So there were any trial of mastery,

He, by two yards in casting bar or stone
Was counted best; and if there chanced a joust,
So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go,
Would hurry thither, and when he saw the knights
Clash like the coming and retiring wave,
And the spear spring, and good horse reel, the boy
Was half beyond himself for ecstasy.

So for a month he wrought among the thralls;
But in the weeks that follow'd, the good Queen,
Repentant of the word she made him swear,
And saddening in her childless castle, sent,
Between the in-crescent and de-crescent moon,
Arms for her son, and loosed him from his vow.

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of Lot
With whom he used to play at tourney once,
When both were children, and in lonely haunts
Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand,
And each at either dash from either end —
Shame never made girl redder than Gareth joy.
He laugh'd; he sprang. 'Out of the smoke, at once
I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee —
These news be mine, none other's — nay, the King's —
Descend into the city': whereon he sought
The King alone, and found, and told him all.

'I have stagger'd thy strong Gawain in a tilt
For pastime; yea, he said it: joust can I.
Make me thy knight — in secret! let my name
Be hidd'n, and give me the first quest, I spring
Like flame from ashes.'

Here the King's calm eye
Fell on, and check'd, and made him flush, and bow
Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answer'd him,
'Son, the good mother let me know thee here,
And sent her wish that I would yield thee thine.
Make thee my knight? my knights are sworn to vows
Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter faithfulness in love,
And uttermost obedience to the King.'

Then Gareth, lightly springing from his knees,
'My King, for hardihood I can promise thee.
For uttermost obedience make demand
Of whom ye gave me to, the Seneschal,
No mellow master of the meats and drinks!
And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,
But love I shall, God willing.'

And the King —
'Make thee my knight in secret? yea, but he,
Our noblest brother, and our truest man,
And one with me in all, he needs must know.'

'Let Lancelot know, my King, let Lancelot know,
Thy noblest and thy truest!'

And the King —
'But wherefore would ye men should wonder at you?
Nay, rather for the sake of me, their King,
And the deed's sake my knighthood do the deed,
Than to be noised of.'

Merrily Gareth ask'd,
'Have I not earn'd my cake in baking of it?
Let be my name until I make my name!

My deeds will speak: it is but for a day.'
So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm
Smiled the great King, and half-unwillingly
Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to him.
Then, after summoning Lancelot privily,
'I have given him the first quest: he is not proven.
Look therefore when he calls for this in hall,
Thou get to horse and follow him far away.
Cover the lions on thy shield, and see
Far as thou mayest, he be nor ta'en nor slain.'

Then that same day there past into the hall
A damsel of high lineage, and a brow
May-blossom, and a cheek of apple-blossom,
Hawk-eyes; and lightly was her slender nose
Tip-tilted like the petal of a flower;
She into the hall past with her page and cried,

'O King, for thou hast driven the foe without,
See to the foe within! bridge, ford, beset
By bandits, everyone that owns a tower
The Lord for half a league. Why sit ye there?
Rest would I not, Sir King, an I were king,
Till ev'n the lonest hold were all as free
From cursed bloodshed, as thine altar-cloth
From that best blood it is a sin to spill.'

'Comfort thyself,' said Arthur, 'I nor mine
Rest: so my knighthood keep the vows they swore,
The wastest moorland of our realm shall be
Safe, damsel, as the centre of this hall.
What is thy name? thy need?'

'My name?' she said —
'Lynette my name; noble; my need, a knight
To combat for my sister, Lyonors,
A lady of high lineage, of great lands,
And comely, yea, and comelier than myself.
She lives in Castle Perilous: a river
Runs in three loops about her living place;
And o'er it are three passings, and three knights
Defend the passings, brethren, and a fourth
And of that four the mightiest, holds her stayed
In her own castle, and so besieges her
To break her will, and make her wed with him:
And but delays his purport till thou send
To do the battle with him, thy chief man
Sir Lancelot whom he trusts to overthrow,
Then wed, with glory: but she will not wed
Save whom she loveth, or a holy life.
Now therefore have I come for Lancelot.'

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Gareth ask'd,
'Damsel, ye know this Order lives to crush
All wrongers of the Realm. But say, these four,
Who be they? What the fashion of the men?'

'They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,
The fashion of that old knight-errantry
Who ride abroad, and do but what they will;
Courteous or bestial from the moment, such
As have nor law nor king; and three of these
Proud in their fantasy call themselves the Day,
Morning-Star, and Noon-Sun, and Evening-Star,
Being strong fools; and never a whit more wise
The fourth, who always rideth arm'd in black,

A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.
He names himself the Night and oftener Death,
And wears a helmet mounted with a skull,
And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,
To show that who may slay or scape the three,
Slain by himself, shall enter endless night.
And all these four be fools, but mighty men,
And therefore am I come for Lancelot.'

Hereat Sir Gareth call'd from where he rose,
A head with kindling eyes above the throng,
'A boon, Sir King — this quest!' then — for he mark'd
Kay near him groaning like a wounded bull —
'Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-knave am I,
And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks am I,
And I can topple over a hundred such.
Thy promise, King,' and Arthur glancing at him,
Brought down a momentary brow. 'Rough, sudden,
And pardonable, worthy to be knight —
Go therefore,' and all hearers were amazed.

But on the damsel's forehead shame, pride, wrath
Slew the May-white: she lifted either arm,
'Fie on thee, King! I ask'd for thy chief knight,
And thou hast given me but a kitchen-knave.'
Then ere a man in hall could stay her, turn'd,
Fled down the lane of access to the King,
Took horse, descended the slope street, and past
The weird white gate, and paused without, beside
The field of tourney, murmuring 'kitchen-knave.'

Now two great entries open'd from the hall,
At one end one, that gave upon a range
Of level pavement where the King would pace

At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
And down from this a lordly stairway sloped
Till lost in blowing trees and tops of towers;
And out by this main doorway past the King.
But one was counter to the hearth, and rose
High that the highest-crested helm could ride
Therethro' nor graze: and by this entry fled
The damsel in her wrath, and on to this
Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the door
King Arthur's gift, the worth of half a town,
A warhorse of the best, and near it stood
The two that out of north had follow'd him:
This bare a maiden shield, a casque; that held
The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth loosed
A cloak that dropt from collar-bone to heel,
A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,
And from it like a fuel-smother'd fire,
That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and flash'd as those
Dull-coated things, that making slide apart
Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there burns
A jewell'd harness, ere they pass and fly.
So Gareth ere he parted flash'd in arms.
Then as he donn'd the helm, and took the shield
And mounted horse and grasped a spear, of grain
Storm-strengthen'd on a windy site, and tipt
With trenchant steel, around him slowly prest
The people, while from out of kitchen came
The thralls in throng, and seeing who had work'd
Lustier than any, and whom they could but love,
Mounted in arms, threw up their caps and cried,
'God bless the King, and all his fellowship!'
And on thro' lanes of shouting Gareth rode
Down the slope street, and past without the gate.

So Gareth past with joy; but as the cur
Pluckt from the cur he fights with, ere his cause
Be cool'd by fighting, follows, being named,
His owner, but remembers all, and growls
Remembering, so Sir Kay beside the door
Mutter'd in scorn of Gareth whom he used
To harry and hustle.

'Bound upon a quest
With horse and arms — the King hath past his time —
My scullion knave! Thralls to your work again,
For an your fire be low ye kindle mine!
Will there be dawn in West and eve in East?
Begone! — my knave! — belike and like enow
Some old head-blow not heeded in his youth
So shook his wits they wander in his prime —
Crazed! How the villain lifted up his voice,
Nor shamed to bawl himself a kitchen-knave.
Tut: he was tame and meek enow with me,
Till peacock'd up with Lancelot's noticing.
Well — I will after my loud knave, and learn
Whether he know me for his master yet.
Out of the smoke he came, and so my lance
Hold, by God's grace, he shall into the mire —
Thence, if the King awaken from his craze,
Into the smoke again.'

But Lancelot said,
'Kay, wherefore wilt thou go against the King,
For that did never he whereon ye rail,
But ever meekly served the King in thee?
Abide: take counsel; for this lad is great
And lusty, and knowing both of lance and sword.'

'Tut, tell not me,' said Kay, 'ye are overfine
To mar stout knaves with foolish courtesies':
Then mounted, on thro' silent faces rode
Down the slope city, and out beyond the gate.

But by the field of tourney lingering yet
Mutter'd the damsel, 'Wherefore did the King
Scorn me? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt, at least
He might have yielded to me one of those
Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,
Rather than — O sweet heaven! O fie upon him! —
His kitchen-knave.'

To whom Sir Gareth drew
(And there were none but few goodlier than he)
Shining in arms, 'Damsel, the quest is mine.
Lead, and I follow.' She thereat, as one
That smells a foul-flesh'd agaric in the holt,
And deems it carrion of some woodland thing,
Or shrew, or weasel, nipt her slender nose
With petulant thumb and finger, shrilling, 'Hence!
Avoid, thou smellest all of kitchen-grease.
And look who comes behind,' for there was Kay.
'Knowest thou not me? thy master? I am Kay.
We lack thee by the hearth.'

And Gareth to him,
'Master no more! too well I know thee, ay —
The most ungentle knight in Arthur's hall.'
'Have at thee then,' said Kay: they shock'd, and Kay
Fell shoulder-slipt, and Gareth cried again,
'Lead, and I follow,' and fast away she fled.

But after sod and shingle ceased to fly
Behind her, and the heart of her good horse

Was nigh to burst with violence of the beat,
Perforce she stay'd, and overtaken spoke.

'What doest thou, scullion, in my fellowship?
Deem'st thou that I accept thee aught the more
Or love thee better, that by some device
Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness,
Thou hast overthrown and slain thy master — thou! —
Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon! — to me
Thou smellest all of kitchen as before.'

'Damsel,' Sir Gareth answer'd gently, 'say
Whate'er ye will, but whatsoe'er ye say,
I leave not till I finish this fair quest,
Or die therefor.'

'Ay, wilt thou finish it?
Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he talks!
The listening rogue hath caught the manner of it.
But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with, knave,
And then by such a one that thou for all
The kitchen brewis that was ever supt
Shalt not once dare to look him in the face.'

'I shall assay,' said Gareth with a smile
That madden'd her, and away she flash'd again
Down the long avenues of a boundless wood,
And Gareth following was again beknaved.

'Sir Kitchen-knave, I have miss'd the only way
Where Arthur's men are set along the wood;
The wood is nigh as full of thieves as leaves:
If both be slain, I am rid of thee; but yet,

Sir Scullion, canst thou use that spit of thine?
Fight, an thou canst: I have miss'd the only way.'

So till the dusk that follow'd evensong
Rode on the two, reviler and reviled;
Then after one long slope was mounted, saw,
Bowl-shaped, thro' tops of many thousand pines
A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink
To westward — in the deeps whereof a mere,
Round as the red eye of an Eagle-owl,
Under the half-dead sunset glared; and shouts
Ascended, and there brake a serving man
Flying from out of the black wood, and crying,
'They have bound my lord to cast him in the mere.'
Then Gareth, 'Bound am I to right the wrong'd,
But straitlier bound am I to bide with thee.'
And when the damsel spake contemptuously,
'Lead, and I follow,' Gareth cried again,
'Follow, I lead!' so down among the pines
He plunged; and there, blackshadow'd nigh the mere,
And mid-thigh-deep in bulrushes and reed,
Saw six tall men haling a seventh along,
A stone about his neck to drown him in it.
Three with good blows he quieted, but three
Fled thro' the pines; and Gareth loosed the stone
From off his neck, then in the mere beside
Tumbled it; oilily bubbled up the mere.
Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free feet
Set him, a stalwart Baron, Arthur's friend.

'Well that ye came, or else these caitiff rogues
Had wreak'd themselves on me; good cause is theirs
To hate me, for my wont hath ever been

To catch my thief, and then like vermin here
Drown him, and with a stone about his neck;
And under this wan water many of them
Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,
And rise, and flickering in a grimly light
Dance on the mere. Good now, ye have saved a life
Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this wood.
And fain would I reward thee worshipfully.
What guerdon will ye?'

Gareth sharply spake,
'None! for the deed's sake have I done the deed,
In uttermost obedience to the King.
But wilt thou yield this damsel harborage?'

Whereat the Baron saying, 'I well believe
You be of Arthur's Table,' a light laugh
Broke from Lynette, 'Ay, truly of a truth,
And in a sort, being Arthur's kitchen-knave! —
But deem not I accept thee aught the more,
Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit
Down on a rout of craven foresters.
A thresher with his flail had scatter'd them.
Nay — for thou smellest of the kitchen still.
But an this lord will yield us harborage,
Well.'

So she spake. A league beyond the wood,
All in a full-fair manor and a rich,
His towers where that day a feast had been
Held in high hall, and many a viand left,
And many a costly cate, received the three.
And there they placed a peacock in his pride

Before the damsel, and the Baron set
Gareth beside her, but at once she rose.

'Meseems, that here is much discourtesy,
Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at my side.
Hear me — this morn I stood in Arthur's hall,
And pray'd the King would grant me Lancelot
To fight the brotherhood of Day and Night —
The last a monster unsubduable
Of any save of him for whom I call'd —
Suddenly bawls this frontless kitchen-knave,
"The quest is mine; thy kitchen-knave am I,
And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks am I."
Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,
"Go therefore," and so gives the quest to him —
Him — here — a villain fitter to stick swine
Than ride abroad redressing women's wrong,
Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman.'

Then half-ashamed and part-amazed, the lord
Now look'd at one and now at other, left
The damsel by the peacock in his pride,
And, seating Gareth at another board,
Sat down beside him, ate and then began.

'Friend, whether thou be kitchen-knave, or not,
Or whether it be the maiden's fantasy,
And whether she be mad, or else the King,
Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,
I ask not: but thou strikest a strong stroke,
For strong thou art and goodly therewithal,
And saver of my life; and therefore now,
For here be mighty men to joust with, weigh

Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel back
To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King.
Thy pardon; I but speak for thine avail,
The saver of my life.'

And Gareth said,
'Full pardon, but I follow up the quest,
Despite of Day and Night and Death and Hell.'

So when, next morn, the lord whose life he saved
Had, some brief space, convey'd them on their way
And left them with God-speed, Sir Gareth spake,
'Lead, and I follow.' Haughtily she replied,

'I fly no more: I allow thee for an hour.
Lion and stoat have isled together, knave,
In time of flood. Nay, furthermore, methinks
Some ruth is mine for thee. Back wilt thou, fool?
For hard by here is one will overthrow
And slay thee: then will I to court again,
And shame the King for only yielding me
My champion from the ashes of his hearth.'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd courteously,
'Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed.
Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt find
My fortunes all as fair as hers who lay
Among the ashes and wedded the King's son.'

Then to the shore of one of those long loops
Wherethro' the serpent river coil'd, they came.
Rough-thicketed were the banks and steep; the stream
Full, narrow; this a bridge of single arc
Took at a leap; and on the further side

Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold
In streaks and rays, and all Lent-lily in hue,
Save that the dome was purple, and above,
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering.
And therebefore the lawless warrior paced
Unarm'd, and calling, 'Damsel, is this he,
The champion thou hast brought from Arthur's hall?
For whom we let thee pass.' 'Nay, nay,' she said,
'Sir Morning-Star. The King in utter scorn
Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee here
His kitchen-knave: and look thou to thyself:
See that he fall not on thee suddenly,
And slay thee unarm'd: he is not knight but knave.'

Then at his call, 'O daughters of the Dawn,
And servants of the Morning-Star, approach,
Arm me,' from out the silken curtain-folds
Bare-footed and bare-headed three fair girls
In gilt and rosy raiment came: their feet
In dewy grasses glisten'd; and the hair
All over glanced with dewdrop or with gem
Like sparkles in the stone Avanturine.
These arm'd him in blue arms, and gave a shield
Blue also, and thereon the morning star.
And Gareth silent gazed upon the knight,
Who stood a moment, ere his horse was brought,
Glorying; and in the stream beneath him, shone
Immingled with Heaven's azure waveringly,
The gay pavilion and the naked feet,
His arms, the rosy raiment, and the star.

Then she that watch'd him, 'Wherefore stare ye so?
Thou shakest in thy fear: there yet is time:

Flee down the valley before he get to horse.
Who will cry shame? Thou art not knight but knave.'

Said Gareth, 'Damsel, whether knave or knight,
Far liefer had I fight a score of times
Than hear thee so missay me and revile.
Fair words were best for him who fights for thee;
But truly foul are better, for they send
That strength of anger thro' mine arms, I know
That I shall overthrow him.'

And he that bore
The star, when mounted, cried from o'er the bridge,
'A kitchen-knave, and sent in scorn of me!
Such fight not I, but answer scorn with scorn.
For this were shame to do him further wrong
Than set him on his feet, and take his horse
And arms, and so return him to the King.
Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly, knave.
Avoid: for it beseemeth not a knave
To ride with such a lady.'

'Dog, thou liest.
I spring from loftier lineage than thine own.'
He spake; and all at fiery speed the two
Shock'd on the central bridge, and either spear
Bent but not brake, and either knight at once,
Hurl'd as a stone from out of a catapult
Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,
Fell, as if dead; but quickly rose and drew,
And Gareth lash'd so fiercely with his brand
He drave his enemy backward down the bridge,
The damsel crying, 'Well-stricken, kitchen-knave!'

Till Gareth's shield was cloven; but one stroke
Laid him that clove it grovelling on the ground.

Then cried the fall'n, 'Take not my life: I yield.'
And Gareth, 'So this damsel ask it of me
Good — I accord it easily as a grace.'
She reddening, 'Insolent scullion: I of thee?
I bound to thee for any favor ask'd!'
'Then shall he die.' And Gareth there unlaced
His helmet as to slay him, but she shriek'd,
'Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay
One nobler than thyself.' 'Damsel, thy charge
Is an abounding pleasure to me. Knight,
Thy life is thine at her command. Arise
And quickly pass to Arthur's hall, and say
His kitchen-knave hath sent thee. See thou crave
His pardon for thy breaking of his laws.
Myself, when I return, will plead for thee.
Thy shield is mine — farewell; and, damsel, thou,
Lead, and I follow.'

And fast away she fled.
Then when he came upon her, spake, 'Methought,
Knave, when I watch'd thee striking on the bridge
The savor of thy kitchen came upon me
A little faintlier: but the wind hath changed:
I scent it twenty-fold.' And then she sang,
'"O morning star" (not that tall felon there
Whom thou by sorcery or unhappiness
Or some device, hast foully overthrown),
"O morning star that smilest in the blue,
O star, my morning dream hath proven true,
Smile sweetly, thou! my love hath smiled on me."

'But thou begone, take counsel, and away,
For hard by here is one that guards a ford —
The second brother in their fool's parable —
Will pay thee all thy wages, and to boot.
Care not for shame: thou art not knight but knave.'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd laughingly,
'Parables? Hear a parable of the knave.
When I was kitchen-knave among the rest
Fierce was the hearth, and one of my co-mates
Own'd a rough dog, to whom he cast his coat,
"Guard it," and there was none to meddle with it.
And such a coat art thou, and thee the King
Gave me to guard, and such a dog am I,
To worry, and not to flee — and — knight or knave —
The knave that doth thee service as full knight
Is all as good, meseems, as any knight
Toward thy sister's freeing.'

'Ay, Sir Knave!
Ay, knave, because thou strikest as a knight,
Being but knave, I hate thee all the more.'

'Fair damsel, you should worship me the more,
That, being but knave, I throw thine enemies.'

'Ay, ay,' she said, 'but thou shalt meet thy match.'

So when they touch'd the second river-loop,
Huge on a huge red horse, and all in mail
Burnish'd to blinding, shone the Noonday Sun
Beyond a raging shallow. As if the flower,
That blows a globe of after arrowlets,

Ten thousand-fold had grown, flash'd the fierce shield,
All sun; and Gareth's eyes had flying blots
Before them when he turn'd from watching him.
He from beyond the roaring shallow roar'd,
'What doest thou, brother, in my marches here?'
And she athwart the shallow shrill'd again,
'Here is a kitchen-knave from Arthur's hall
Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath his arms.'
'Ugh!' cried the Sun, and vizoring up a red
And cipher face of rounded foolishness,
Push'd horse across the foamings of the ford,
Whom Gareth met midstream: no room was there
For lance or tourney-skill: four strokes they struck
With sword, and these were mighty; the new knight
Had fear he might be shamed; but as the Sun
Heaved up a ponderous arm to strike the fifth,
The hoof of his horse slipt in the stream, the stream
Descended, and the Sun was wash'd away.

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the ford;
So drew him home; but he that fought no more,
As being all bone-batter'd on the rock,
Yielded; and Gareth sent him to the King.
'Myself when I return will plead for thee.
Lead, and I follow.' Quietly she led.
'Hath not the good wind, damsel, changed again?'
'Nay, not a point: nor art thou victor here.
There lies a ridge of slate across the ford;
His horse thereon stumbled — ay, for I saw it.

'"O Sun" (not this strong fool whom thou, Sir Knave,
Hast overthrown thro' mere unhappiness),
"O Sun, that wakenest all to bliss or pain,

O moon, that layest all to sleep again,
Shine sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me."

'What knowest thou of lovesong or of love?
Nay, nay, God wot, so thou wert nobly born,
Thou hast a pleasant presence. Yea, perchance, —

'"O dewy flowers that open to the sun,
O dewy flowers that close when day is done,
Blow sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me."

'What knowest thou of flowers, except, belike,
To garnish meats with? hath not our good King
Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchendom,
A foolish love for flowers? what stick ye round
The pasty? wherewithal deck the boar's head?
Flowers? nay, the boar hath rosemaries and bay.

'"O birds, that warble to the morning sky,
O birds that warble as the day goes by,
Sing sweetly: twice my love hath smiled on me."

'What knowest thou of birds, lark, mavis, merle,
Linnet? what dream ye when they utter forth
May-music growing with the growing light,
Their sweet sun-worship? these be for the snare
(So runs thy fancy), these be for the spit,
Larding and basting. See thou have not now
Larded thy last, except thou turn and fly.
There stands the third fool of their allegory.'

For there beyond a bridge of treble bow,
All in a rose-red from the west, and all

Naked it seem'd, and glowing in the broad
Deep-dimpled current underneath, the knight,
That named himself the Star of Evening, stood.

And Gareth, 'Wherefore waits the madman there
Naked in open dayshine?' 'Nay,' she cried,
'Not naked, only wrapt in harden'd skins
That fit him like his own; and so ye cleave
His armor off him, these will turn the blade.'

Then the third brother shouted o'er the bridge,
'O brother-star, why shine ye here so low?
Thy ward is higher up: but have ye slain
The damsel's champion?' and the damsel cried,

'No star of thine, but shot from Arthur's heaven
With all disaster unto thine and thee!
For both thy younger brethren have gone down
Before this youth; and so wilt thou, Sir Star;
Art thou not old?'

'Old, damsel, old and hard,
Old, with the might and breath of twenty boys.'
Said Gareth, 'Old, and over-bold in brag!
But that same strength which threw the Morning Star
Can throw the Evening.'

Then that other blew
A hard and deadly note upon the horn.
'Approach and arm me!' With slow steps from out
An old storm-beaten, russet, many-stain'd
Pavilion, forth a grizzled damsel came,
And arm'd him in old arms, and brought a helm
With but a drying evergreen for crest,

And gave a shield whereon the Star of Even
Half-tarnish'd and half-bright, his emblem, shone.
But when it glitter'd o'er the saddle-bow,
They madly hurl'd together on the bridge;
And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,
There met him drawn, and overthrew him again,
But up like fire he started: and as oft
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his knees,
So many a time he vaulted up again;
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great heart,
Foredooming all his trouble was in vain,
Labor'd within him, for he seem'd as one
That all in later, sadder age begins
To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise, and cry,
'Thou hast made us lords, and canst not put us down!'
He half despairs; so Gareth seem'd to strike
Vainly, the damsel clamoring all the while,
'Well done, knave-knight, well stricken, O good knight-knave —
O knave, as noble as any of all the knights —
Shame me not, shame me not. I have prophesied —
Strike, thou art worthy of the Table Round —
His arms are old, he trusts the harden'd skin —
Strike — strike — the wind will never change again.'
And Gareth hearing ever stronglier smote,
And hew'd great pieces of his armor off him,
But lash'd in vain against the harden'd skin,
And could not wholly bring him under, more
Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge on ridge,
The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and springs
For ever; till at length Sir Gareth's brand
Clash'd his, and brake it utterly to the hilt.

'I have thee now'; but forth that other sprang,
And, all unknightlike, writhed his wiry arms
Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,
Strangled, but straining ev'n his uttermost
Cast, and so hurl'd him headlong o'er the bridge
Down to the river, sink or swim, and cried,
'Lead, and I follow.'

But the damsel said,
I lead no longer; ride thou at my side;
Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-knaves.

'"O trefoil, sparkling on the rainy plain,
O rainbow with three colors after rain,
Shine sweetly: thrice my love hath smiled on me."

'Sir, — and, good faith, I fain had added — Knight,
But that I heard thee call thyself a knave, —
Shamed am I that I so rebuked, reviled,
Missaid thee; noble I am; and thought the King
Scorn'd me and mine; and now thy pardon, friend,
For thou hast ever answer'd courteously,
And wholly bold thou art, and meek withal
As any of Arthur's best, but, being knave,
Hast mazed my wit: I marvel what thou art.'

'Damsel,' he said, 'you be not all to blame,
Saving that you mistrusted our good King
Would handle scorn, or yield you, asking, one
Not fit to cope your quest. You said your say;
Mine answer was my deed. Good sooth! I hold
He scarce is knight, yea but half-man, nor meet
To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets

His heart be stirr'd with any foolish heat
At any gentle damsel's waywardness.
Shamed! care not! thy foul sayings fought for me:
And seeing now thy words are fair, methinks
There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his great self,
Hath force to quell me.'

Nigh upon that hour
When the lone hern forgets his melancholy,
Lets down his other leg, and stretching, dreams
Of goodly supper in the distant pool,
Then turn'd the noble damsel smiling at him,
And told him of a cavern hard at hand,
Where bread and baken meats and good red wine
Of Southland, which the Lady Lyonors
Had sent her coming champion, waited him.

Anon they past a narrow comb wherein
Were slabs of rock with figures, knights on horse
Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-waning hues.
'Sir Knave, my knight, a hermit once was here,
Whose holy hand hath fashion'd on the rock
The war of Time against the soul of man.
And yon four fools have suck'd their allegory
From these damp walls, and taken but the form.
Know ye not these?' and Gareth lookt and read—
In letters like to those the vexillary
Hath left crag-carven o'er the streaming Gelt—
'PHOSPHORUS' then 'MERIDIES'—'HESPERUS'—
'NOX'—'MORS,' beneath five figures, armed men,
Slab after slab, their faces forward all,
And running down the Soul, a Shape that fled
With broken wings, torn raiment and loose hair,
For help and shelter to the hermit's cave.

'Follow the faces, and we find it. Look,
Who comes behind!'

For one — delay'd at first
Thro' helping back the dislocated Kay
To Camelot, then by what thereafter chanced,
The damsel's headlong error thro' the wood —
Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-loops —
His blue shield-lions cover'd — softly drew
Behind the twain, and when he saw the star
Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him, cried,
'Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my friend.'
And Gareth crying prick'd against the cry;
But when they closed — in a moment — at one touch
Of that skill'd spear, the wonder of the world —
Went sliding down so easily, and fell,
That when he found the grass within his hands
He laugh'd; the laughter jarr'd upon Lynette:
Harshly she ask'd him, 'Shamed and overthrown,
And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,
Why laugh ye? that ye blew your boast in vain?'
'Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son
Of old King Lot and good Queen Bellicent,
And victor of the bridges and the ford,
And knight of Arthur, here lie thrown by whom
I know not, all thro' mere unhappiness —
Device and sorcery and unhappiness —
Out, sword; we are thrown!' And Lancelot answer'd:
'Prince,
O Gareth — thro' the mere unhappiness
Of one who came to help thee, not to harm,
Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee whole,
As on the day when Arthur knighted him.'

Then Gareth, 'Thou — Lancelot! — thine the hand
That threw me? An some chance to mar the boast
Thy brethren of thee make — which could not chance —
Had sent thee down before a lesser spear,
Shamed had I been, and sad — O Lancelot — thou!'

Whereat the maiden, petulant, 'Lancelot,
Why came ye not, when call'd? and wherefore now
Come ye, not call'd? I gloried in my knave,
Who being still rebuked, would answer still
Courteous as any knight — but now, if knight,
The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd and tricked,
And only wondering wherefore play'd upon:
And doubtful whether I and mine be scorn'd.
Where should be truth if not in Arthur's hall,
In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave, prince and fool,
I hate thee and for ever.'

And Lancelot said,
'Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth! knight art thou
To the King's best wish. O damsel, be you wise
To call him shamed, who is but overthrown?
Thrown have I been, nor once, but many a time.
Victor from vanquish'd issues at the last,
And overthrower from being overthrown.
With sword we have not striven; and thy good horse
And thou are weary; yet not less I felt
Thy manhood thro' that wearied lance of thine.
Well hast thou done; for all the stream is freed,
And thou hast wreak'd his justice on his foes,
And when reviled, hast answer'd graciously,
And makest merry when overthrown. Prince, Knight,
Hail, Knight and Prince, and of our Table Round!'

And then when turning to Lynette he told
The tale of Gareth, petulantly she said,
'Ay well — ay well — for worse than being fool'd
Of others, is to fool one's self. A cave,
Sir Lancelot, is hard by, with meats and drinks
And forage for the horse, and flint for fire.
But all about it flies a honeysuckle.
Seek, till we find.' And when they sought and found,
Sir Gareth drank and ate, and all his life
Past into sleep; on whom the maiden gazed.
'Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to sleep hast thou.
Wake lusty! Seem I not as tender to him
As any mother? Ay, but such a one
As all day long hath rated at her child,
And vext his day, but blesses him asleep —
Good lord, how sweetly smells the honeysuckle
In the hush'd night, as if the world were one
Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!
O Lancelot, Lancelot' — and she clapt her hands —
'Full merry am I to find my goodly knave
Is knight and noble. See now, sworn have I,
Else yon black felon had not let me pass,
To bring thee back to do the battle with him.
Thus an thou goest, he will fight thee first;
Who doubts thee victor? so will my knight-knave
Miss the full flower of this accomplishment.'

Said Lancelot, 'Peradventure he, you name,
May know my shield. Let Gareth, an he will,
Change his for mine, and take my charger, fresh,
Not to be spurr'd, loving the battle as well
As he that rides him.' 'Lancelot-like,' she said,
'Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in all.'

And Gareth, wakening, fiercely clutch'd the shield;
'Ramp ye lance-splintering lions, on whom all spears
Are rotten sticks! ye seem agape to roar!
Yea, ramp and roar at leaving of your lord!—
Care not, good beasts, so well I care for you.
O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these
Streams virtue — fire — thro' one that will not shame
Even the shadow of Lancelot under shield.
Hence: let us go.'

Silent the silent field
They traversed. Arthur's harp tho' summer-wan,
In counter motion to the clouds, allured
The glance of Gareth dreaming on his liege.
A star shot: 'Lo,' said Gareth, 'the foe falls!'
An owl whoopt: 'Hark the victor pealing there!'
Suddenly she that rode upon his left
Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent him, crying,
'Yield, yield him this again: 't is he must fight:
I curse the tongue that all thro' yesterday
Reviled thee, and hath wrought on Lancelot now
To lend thee horse and shield: wonders ye have done;
Miracles ye cannot: here is glory enow
In having flung the three: I see thee maim'd,
Mangled: I swear thou canst not fling the fourth.'

'And wherefore, damsel? tell me all ye know.
You cannot scare me; nor rough face, or voice,
Brute bulk of limb, or boundless savagery
Appall me from the quest.'

'Nay, Prince,' she cried,
'God wot, I never look'd upon the face,
Seeing he never rides abroad by day;
But watch'd him have I like a phantom pass

Chilling the night: nor have I heard the voice.
Always he made his mouthpiece of a page
Who came and went, and still reported him
As closing in himself the strength of ten,
And when his anger tare him, massacring
Man, woman, lad and girl — yea, the soft babe!
Some hold that he hath swallow'd infant flesh,
Monster! O Prince, I went for Lancelot first,
The quest is Lancelot's: give him back the shield.'

Said Gareth laughing, 'An he fight for this,
Belike he wins it as the better man:
Thus — and not else!'

But Lancelot on him urged
All the devisings of their chivalry
When one might meet a mightier than himself;
How best to manage horse, lance, sword and shield,
And so fill up the gap where force might fail
With skill and fineness. Instant were his words.

Then Gareth, 'Here be rules. I know but one —
To dash against mine enemy and to win.
Yet have I watch'd thee victor in the joust,
And seen thy way.' 'Heaven help thee,' sigh'd Lynette.

Then for a space, and under cloud that grew
To thunder-gloom palling all stars, they rode
In converse till she made her palfrey halt,
Lifted an arm, and softly whisper'd, 'There.'
And all the three were silent seeing, pitch'd
Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,
A huge pavilion like a mountain peak
Sunder the glooming crimson on the marge,
Black, with black banner, and a long black horn
Beside it hanging; which Sir Gareth graspt,

And so, before the two could hinder him,
Sent all his heart and breath thro' all the horn.
Echo'd the walls; a light twinkled; anon
Came lights and lights, and once again he blew;
Whereon were hollow tramplings up and down
And muffled voices heard, and shadows past;
Till high above him, circled with her maids,
The Lady Lyonors at a window stood,
Beautiful among lights, and waving to him
White hands, and courtesy; but when the Prince
Three times had blown — after long hush — at last —
The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,
Thro' those black foldings, that which housed therein.
High on a nightblack horse, in nightblack arms,
With white breast-bone, and barren ribs of Death,
And crown'd with fleshless laughter — some ten steps —
In the half-light — thro' the dim dawn — advanced
The monster, and then paused, and spake no word.

But Gareth spake and all indignantly,
'Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength of ten,
Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God hath given,
But must, to make the terror of thee more,
Trick thyself out in ghastly imageries
Of that which Life hath done with, and the clod,
Less dull than thou, will hide with mantling flowers
As if for pity?' But he spake no word;
Which set the horror higher: a maiden swoon'd;
The Lady Lyonors wrung her hands and wept,
As doom'd to be the bride of Night and Death;
Sir Gareth's head prickled beneath his helm;
And ev'n Sir Lancelot thro' his warm blood felt
Ice strike, and all that mark'd him were aghast.

At once Sir Lancelot's charger fiercely neigh'd,
And Death's dark war-horse bounded forward with him.
Then those that did not blink the terror, saw
That Death was cast to ground, and slowly rose.
But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the skull.
Half fell to right and half to left and lay.
Then with a stronger buffet he clove the helm
As throughly as the skull; and out from this
Issued the bright face of a blooming boy
Fresh as a flower new-born, and crying, 'Knight,
Slay me not: my three brethren bade me do it,
To make a horror all about the house,
And stay the world from Lady Lyonors.
They never dream'd the passes would be past.'
Answer'd Sir Gareth graciously to one
Not many a moon his younger, 'My fair child,
What madness made thee challenge the chief knight
Of Arthur's hall?' 'Fair Sir, they bade me do it.
They hate the King, and Lancelot, the King's friend,
They hoped to slay him somewhere on the stream,
They never dream'd the passes could be past.'

Then sprang the happier day from underground;
And Lady Lyonors and her house, with dance
And revel and song, made merry over Death,
As being after all their foolish fears
And horrors only proven a blooming boy.
So large mirth lived and Gareth won the quest.

And he that told the tale in older times
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonors,
But he, that told it later, says Lynette.

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the east
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot;
Which first she placed where morning's earliest ray
Might strike it, and awake her with the gleam;
Then fearing rust or soilure fashion'd for it
A case of silk, and braided thereupon
All the devices blazon'd on the shield
In their own tinct, and added, of her wit,
A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow-throated nestling in the nest.
Nor rested thus content, but day by day,
Leaving her household and good father, climb'd
That eastern tower, and entering barr'd the door,
Stript off the case, and read the naked shield,
Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his arms,
Now made a pretty history to herself
Of every dint a sword had beaten in it,
And every scratch a lance had made upon it,
Conjecturing when and where: this cut is fresh;
That ten years back; this dealt him at Caerlyle;
That at Caerleon; this at Camelot:
And ah God's mercy, what a stroke was there!
And here a thrust that might have kill'd, but God
Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his enemy down,
And saved him: so she lived in fantasy.

How came the lily maid by that good shield
Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his name?
He left it with her, when he rode to tilt
For the great diamond in the diamond jousts,
Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that name
Had named them, since a diamond was the prize.

For Arthur, long before they crown'd him King,
Roving the trackless realms of Lyonesse,
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black tarn.
A horror lived about the tarn, and clave
Like its own mists to all the mountain side:
For here two brothers, one a king, had met
And fought together; but their names were lost;
And each had slain his brother at a blow;
And down they fell and made the glen abhorr'd:
And there they lay till all their bones were bleach'd,
And lichen'd into color with the crags:
And he, that once was king, had on a crown
Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside.
And Arthur came, and laboring up the pass,
All in a misty moonshine, unawares
Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and the skull
Brake from the nape, and from the skull the crown
Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tarn:
And down the shingly scaur he plunged, and caught,
And set it on his head, and in his heart
Heard murmurs, 'Lo, thou likewise shalt be King.'

Thereafter, when a King, he had the gems
Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them to his knights,
Saying, 'These jewels, whereupon I chanced

Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the King's —
For public use: henceforward let there be,
Once every year, a joust for one of these:
For so by nine years' proof we needs must learn
Which is our mightiest, and ourselves shall grow
In use of arms and manhood, till we drive
The heathen, who, some say, shall rule the land
Hereafter, which God hinder.' Thus he spoke:
And eight years past, eight jousts had been, and still
Had Lancelot won the diamond of the year,
With purpose to present them to the Queen,
When all were won; but meaning all at once
To snare her royal fancy with a boon
Worth half her realm, had never spoken word.

Now for the central diamond and the last
And largest, Arthur, holding then his court
Hard on the river nigh the place which now
Is this world's hugest, let proclaim a joust
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
Spake (for she had been sick) to Guinevere,
'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot move
To these fair jousts?' 'Yea, lord,' she said, 'ye know it.'
'Then will ye miss,' he answer'd, 'the great deeds
Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,
A sight ye love to look on.' And the Queen
Lifted her eyes, and they dwelt languidly
On Lancelot, where he stood beside the King.
He thinking that he read her meaning there,
'Stay with me, I am sick; my love is more
Than many diamonds,' yielded; and a heart
Love-loyal to the least wish of the Queen
(However much he yearn'd to make complete

The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)
Urged him to speak against the truth, and say,
'Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly whole,
And lets me from the saddle'; and the King
Glanced first at him, then her, and went his way.
No sooner gone than suddenly she began:

'To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot, much to blame!
Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the knights
Are half of them our enemies, and the crowd
Will murmur, "Lo the shameless ones, who take
Their pastime now the trustful King is gone!"'
Then Lancelot vext at having lied in vain:
'Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise,
My Queen, that summer, when ye loved me first.
Then of the crowd ye took no more account
Than of the myriad cricket of the mead,
When its own voice clings to each blade of grass,
And every voice is nothing. As to knights,
Them surely can I silence with all ease.
But now my loyal worship is allow'd
Of all men: many a bard, without offence,
Has link'd our names together in his lay,
Lancelot, the flower of bravery, Guinevere,
The pearl of beauty: and our knights at feast
Have pledged us in this union, while the King
Would listen smiling. How then? is there more?
Has Arthur spoken aught? or would yourself,
Now weary of my service and devoir,
Henceforth be truer to your faultless lord?'

She broke into a little scornful laugh:
'Arthur, my lord, Arthur, the faultless King,

That passionate perfection, my good lord —
But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?
He never spake word of reproach to me,
He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,
He cares not for me: only here to-day
There gleam'd a vague suspicion in his eyes:
Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with him — else
Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
And swearing men to vows impossible,
To make them like himself: but, friend, to me
He is all fault who hath no fault at all:
For who loves me must have a touch of earth;
The low sun makes the color: I am yours,
Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the bond.
And therefore hear my words: go to the jousts:
The tiny-trumpeting gnat can break our dream
When sweetest; and the vermin voices here
May buzz so loud — we scorn them, but they sting.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights:
'And with what face, after my pretext made,
Shall I appear, O Queen, at Camelot, I
Before a King who honors his own word,
As if it were his God's?'

'Yea,' said the Queen,
'A moral child without the craft to rule,
Else had he not lost me: but listen to me,
If I must find you wit: we hear it said
That men go down before your spear at a touch,
But knowing you are Lancelot; your great name,
This conquers: hide it therefore; go unknown:
Win! by this kiss you will: and our true King

Will then allow your pretext, O my knight,
As all for glory; for to speak him true,
Ye know right well, how meek soe'er he seem,
No keener hunter after glory breathes.
He loves it in his knights more than himself:
They prove to him his work: win and return.'

Then got Sir Lancelot suddenly to horse,
Wroth at himself. Not willing to be known,
He left the barren-beaten thoroughfare,
Chose the green path that show'd the rarer foot,
And there among the solitary downs,
Full often lost in fancy, lost his way;
Till as he traced a faintly-shadow'd track,
That all in loops and links among the dales
Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw
Fired from the west, far on a hill, the towers.
Thither he made, and blew the gateway horn.
Then came an old, dumb, myriad-wrinkled man,
Who let him into lodging and disarm'd.
And Lancelot marvell'd at the wordless man;
And issuing found the Lord of Astolat
With two strong sons, Sir Torre and Sir Lavaine,
Moving to meet him in the castle court;
And close behind them stept the lily maid
Elaine, his daughter: mother of the house
There was not: some light jest among them rose
With laughter dying down as the great knight
Approach'd them: then the Lord of Astolat:
'Whence comest thou, my guest, and by what name
Livest between the lips? for by thy state
And presence I might guess thee chief of those,
After the King, who eat in Arthur's halls.

Him have I seen: the rest, his Table Round,
Known as they are, to me they are unknown.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights:
'Known am I, and of Arthur's hall, and known,
What I by mere mischance have brought, my shield.
But since I go to joust as one unknown
At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not,
Hereafter ye shall know me — and the shield —
I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
Blank, or at least with some device not mine.'

Then said the Lord of Astolat, 'Here is Torre's:
Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre.
And so, God wot, his shield is blank enough.
His ye can have.' Then added plain Sir Torre,
'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have it.'
Here laugh'd the father saying, 'Fie, Sir Churl,
Is that an answer for a noble knight?
Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger here,
He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an hour,
And set it in this damsel's golden hair,
To make her thrice as wilful as before.'

'Nay, father, nay, good father, shame me not
Before this noble knight,' said young Lavaine,
'For nothing. Surely I but play'd on Torre:
He seem'd so sullen, vext he could not go:
A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden dreamt
That some one put this diamond in her hand,
And that it was too slippery to be held,
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,

The castle-well, belike; and then I said
That *if* I went and *if* I fought and won it
(But all was jest and joke among ourselves)
Then must she keep it safelier. All was jest.
But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight:
Win shall I not, but do my best to win:
Young as I am, yet would I do my best.'

'So ye will grace me,' answer'd Lancelot,
Smiling a moment, 'with your fellowship
O'er these waste downs whereon I lost myself,
Then were I glad of you as guide and friend:
And you shall win this diamond, — as I hear
It is a fair large diamond, — if ye may,
And yield it to this maiden, if ye will.'
'A fair large diamond,' added plain Sir Torre,
'Such be for queens, and not for simple maids.'
Then she, who held her eyes upon the ground,
Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
Flush'd slightly at the slight disparagement
Before the stranger knight, who, looking at her,
Full courtly, yet not falsely, thus return'd:
'If what is fair be but for what is fair,
And only queens are to be counted so,
Rash were my judgment then, who deem this maid
Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
Not violating the bond of like to like.'

He spoke and ceased: the lily maid Elaine,
Won by the mellow voice before she look'd,
Lifted her eyes, and read his lineaments.
The great and guilty love he bare the Queen,

In battle with the love he bare his lord,
Had marr'd his face, and mark'd it ere his time.
Another sinning on such heights with one,
The flower of all the west and all the world,
Had been the sleeker for it: but in him
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
And drove him into wastes and solitudes
For agony, who was yet a living soul.
Marr'd as he was, he seem'd the goodliest man
That ever among ladies ate in hall,
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes.
However marr'd, of more than twice her years,
Seam'd with an ancient swordcut on the cheek,
And bruised and bronzed, she lifted up her eyes
And loved him, with that love which was her doom.

Then the great knight, the darling of the court,
Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall
Stept with all grace, and not with half disdain
Hid under grace, as in a smaller time,
But kindly man moving among his kind:
Whom they with meats and vintage of their best
And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd.
And much they ask'd of court and Table Round,
And ever well and readily answer'd he:
But Lancelot, when they glanced at Guinevere,
Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,
Heard from the Baron that, ten years before,
The heathen caught and reft him of his tongue.
'He learnt and warn'd me of their fierce design
Against my house, and him they caught and maim'd;
But I, my sons, and little daughter fled
From bonds or death, and dwelt among the woods

By the great river in a boatman's hut.
Dull days were those, till our good Arthur broke
The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill.'

'O there, great lord, doubtless,' Lavaine said, rapt
By all the sweet and sudden passion of youth
Toward greatness in its elder, 'you have fought.
O tell us — for we live apart — you know
Of Arthur's glorious wars.' And Lancelot spoke
And answer'd him at full, as having been
With Arthur in the fight which all day long
Rang by the white mouth of the violent Glem;
And in the four loud battles by the shore
Of Duglas; that on Bassa; then the war
That thunder'd in and out the gloomy skirts
Of Celidon the forest; and again
By Castle Gurnion, where the glorious King
Had on his cuirass worn our Lady's Head,
Carv'd of one emerald centr'd in a sun
Of silver rays, that lighten'd as he breathed;
And at Caerleon had he help'd his lord,
When the strong neighings of the wild white Horse
Set every gilded parapet shuddering;
And up in Agned-Cathregonion too,
And down the waste sand-shores of Trath Treroit,
Where many a heathen fell; 'and on the mount
Of Badon I myself beheld the King
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
And all his legions crying Christ and him,
And brake them; and I saw him, after, stand
High on a heap of slain, from spur to plume
Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,
And seeing me, with a great voice he cried,

" They are broken, they are broken!" for the King,
However mild he seems at home, nor cares
For triumph in our mimic wars, the jousts —
For if his own knight cast him down, he laughs
Saying, his knights are better men than he —
Yet in this heathen war the fire of God
Fills him: I never saw his like: there lives
No greater leader.'

While he utter'd this,
Low to her own heart said the lily maid,
' Save your great self, fair lord '; and when he fell
From talk of war to traits of pleasantry —
Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind —
She still took note that when the living smile
Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
Of melancholy severe, from which again,
Whenever in her hovering to and fro
The lily maid had striven to make him cheer,
There brake a sudden-beaming tenderness
Of manners and of nature: and she thought
That all was nature, all, perchance, for her.
And all night long his face before her lived,
As when a painter, poring on a face,
Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
The shape and color of a mind and life,
Lives for his children, ever at its best
And fullest; so the face before her lived,
Dark-splendid, speaking in the silence, full
Of noble things, and held her from her sleep.
Till rathe she rose, half-cheated in the thought
She needs must bid farewell to sweet Lavaine.

First as in fear, step after step, she stole
Down the long tower-stairs, hesitating:
Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the court,
'This shield, my friend, where is it?' and Lavaine
Past inward, as she came from out the tower.
There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd, and smooth'd
The glossy shoulder, humming to himself.
Half-envious of the flattering hand, she drew
Nearer and stood. He look'd, and more amazed
Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
The maiden standing in the dewy light.
He had not dream'd she was so beautiful.
Then came on him a sort of sacred fear,
For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood
Rapt on his face as if it were a god's.
Suddenly flash'd on her a wild desire,
That he should wear her favor at the tilt.
She braved a riotous heart in asking for it.
'Fair lord, whose name I know not — noble it is,
I well believe, the noblest — will you wear
My favor at this tourney?' 'Nay,' said he,
'Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
Favor of any lady in the lists.
Such is my wont, as those, who know me, know.'
'Yea, so,' she answer'd; 'then in wearing mine
Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble lord,
That those who know should know you.' And he turn'd
Her counsel up and down within his mind,
And found it true, and answer'd, 'True, my child.
Well, I will wear it: fetch it out to me:
What is it?' and she told him 'A red sleeve
Broider'd with pearls,' and brought it: then he bound
Her token on his helmet, with a smile

Saying, 'I never yet have done so much
For any maiden living,' and the blood
Sprang to her face and fill'd her with delight;
But left her all the paler, when Lavaine
Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd shield,
His brother's; which he gave to Lancelot,
Who parted with his own to fair Elaine:
'Do me this grace, my child, to have my shield
In keeping till I come.' 'A grace to me,'
She answer'd, 'twice to-day. I am your squire!'
Whereat Lavaine said, laughing, 'Lily maid,
For fear our people call you lily maid
In earnest, let me bring your color back;
Once, twice, and thrice: now get you hence to bed':
So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own hand,
And thus they moved away: she stay'd a minute,
Then made a sudden step to the gate, and there —
Her bright hair blown about the serious face
Yet rosy-kindled with her brother's kiss —
Paused by the gateway, standing near the shield
In silence, while she watch'd their arms far-off
Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs.
Then to her tower she climb'd, and took the shield,
There kept it, and so lived in fantasy.

Meanwhile the new companions past away
Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs,
To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived a knight
Not far from Camelot, now for forty years
A hermit, who had pray'd, labor'd and pray'd,
And ever laboring had scoop'd himself
In the white rock a chapel and a hall
On massive columns, like a shorecliff cave,

And cells and chambers: all were fair and dry;
The green light from the meadows underneath
Struck up and lived along the milky roofs;
And in the meadows tremulous aspen-trees
And poplars made a noise of falling showers.
And thither wending there that night they bode.

But when the next day broke from underground,
And shot red fire and shadows thro' the cave,
They rose, heard mass, broke fast, and rode away:
Then Lancelot saying, 'Hear, but hold my name
Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the Lake,'
Abash'd Lavaine, whose instant reverence,
Dearer to true young hearts than their own praise,
But left him leave to stammer, 'Is it indeed?'
And after muttering 'The great Lancelot,'
At last he got his breath and answer'd, 'One,
One have I seen — that other, our liege lord,
The dread Pendragon, Britain's King of kings,
Of whom the people talk mysteriously,
He will be there — then were I stricken blind
That minute, I might say that I had seen.'

So spake Lavaine, and when they reach'd the lists
By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes
Run thro' the peopled gallery which half round
Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,
Until they found the clear-faced King, who sat
Robed in red samite, easily to be known,
Since to his crown the golden dragon clung,
And down his robe the dragon writhed in gold,
And from the carven-work behind him crept
Two dragons gilded, sloping down to make

Arms for his chair, while all the rest of them
Thro' knots and loops and folds innumerable
Fled ever thro' the woodwork, till they found
The new design wherein they lost themselves,
Yet with all ease, so tender was the work:
And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,
Blazed the last diamond of the nameless king.

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine and said,
'Me you call great: mine is the firmer seat,
The truer lance: but there is many a youth
Now crescent, who will come to all I am
And overcome it; and in me there dwells
No greatness, save it be some far-off touch
Of greatness to know well I am not great:
There is the man.' And Lavaine gaped upon him
As on a thing miraculous, and anon
The trumpets blew; and then did either side,
They that assail'd, and they that held the lists,
Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,
Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
Shock, that a man far-off might well perceive,
If any man that day were left afield,
The hard earth shake, and a low thunder of arms.
And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
Which were the weaker; then he hurl'd into it
Against the stronger: little need to speak
Of Lancelot in his glory! King, duke, earl,
Count, baron — whom he smote, he overthrew.

But in the field were Lancelot's kith and kin,
Ranged with the Table Round that held the lists,
Strong-men, and wrathful that a stranger knight

Should do and almost overdo the deeds
Of Lancelot; and one said to the other, 'Lo!
What is he? I do not mean the force alone —
The grace and versatility of the man!
Is it not Lancelot?' 'When has Lancelot worn
Favor of any lady in the lists?
Not such his wont, as we, that know him, know.'
'How then? who then?' a fury seized them all,
A fiery family passion for the name
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs.
They couch'd their spears and prick'd their steeds, and thus,
Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind they made
In moving, all together down upon him
Bare, as a wild wave in the wide North-sea,
Green-glimmering toward the summit, bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the skies,
Down on a bark, and overbears the bark,
And him that helms it, so they overbore
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spear
Down-glancing lamed the charger, and a spear
Prick'd sharply his own cuirass, and the head
Pierced thro' his side, and there snapt, and remain'd.

Then Sir Lavaine did well and worshipfully;
He bore a knight of old repute to the earth,
And brought his horse to Lancelot where he lay.
He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
But thought to do while he might yet endure,
And being lustily holpen by the rest,
His party, — tho' it seem'd half-miracle
To those he fought with, — drave his kith and kin,
And all the Table Round that held the lists,

Back to the barrier; then the trumpets blew
Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the sleeve
Of scarlet, and the pearls; and all the knights,
His party, cried, 'Advance and take thy prize
The diamond'; but he answer'd, 'Diamond me
No diamonds! for God's love, a little air!
Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death!
Hence will I, and I charge you, follow me not.'

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from the field
With young Lavaine into the poplar grove.
There from his charger down he slid, and sat,
Gasping to Sir Lavaine, 'Draw the lance-head':
'Ah my sweet lord Sir Lancelot,' said Lavaine,
'I dread me, if I draw it, you will die.'
But he, 'I die already with it: draw —
Draw,' — and Lavaine drew, and Sir Lancelot gave
A marvellous great shriek and ghastly groan,
And half his blood burst forth, and down he sank
For the pure pain, and wholly swoon'd away.
Then came the hermit out and bare him in,
There stanch'd his wound; and there, in daily doubt
Whether to live or die, for many a week
Hid from the wide world's rumor by the grove
Of poplars with their noise of falling showers,
And ever-tremulous aspen-trees, he lay.

But on that day when Lancelot fled the lists,
His party, knights of utmost North and West,
Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate isles,
Came round their great Pendragon, saying to him,
'Lo, Sire, our knight, thro' whom we won the day,
Hath gone sore wounded, and hath left his prize

Untaken, crying that his prize is death.'
'Heaven hinder,' said the King, 'that such an one,
So great a knight as we have seen to-day —
He seem'd to me another Lancelot —
Yea, twenty times I thought him Lancelot —
He must not pass uncared for. Wherefore, rise,
O Gawain, and ride forth and find the knight.
Wounded and wearied needs must he be near.
I charge you that you get at once to horse.
And, knights and kings, there breathes not one of you
Will deem this prize of ours is rashly given:
His prowess was too wondrous. We will do him
No customary honor: since the knight
Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,
Ourselves will send it after. Rise and take
This diamond, and deliver it, and return,
And bring us where he is, and how he fares,
And cease not from your quest until ye find.'

So saying, from the carven flower above,
To which it made a restless heart, he took,
And gave, the diamond: then from where he sat
At Arthur's right, with smiling face arose,
With smiling face and frowning heart, a Prince
In the mid might and flourish of his May,
Gawain, surnamed The Courteous, fair and strong,
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and Geraint
And Gareth, a good knight, but therewithal
Sir Modred's brother, and the child of Lot,
Nor often loyal to his word, and now
Wroth that the King's command to sally forth
In quest of whom he knew not, made him leave
The banquet, and concourse of knights and kings.

So all in wrath he got to horse and went;
While Arthur to the banquet, dark in mood,
Past, thinking, 'Is it Lancelot who hath come
Despite the wound he spake of, all for gain
Of glory, and hath added wound to wound,
And ridd'n away to die?' So fear'd the King,
And, after two days' tarriance there, return'd.
Then when he saw the Queen, embracing ask'd,
'Love, are you yet so sick?' 'Nay, lord,' she said.
'And where is Lancelot?' Then the Queen amazed,
'Was he not with you? won he not your prize?'
'Nay, but one like him.' 'Why that like was he.'
And when the King demanded how she knew,
Said, 'Lord, no sooner had ye parted from us,
Than Lancelot told me of a common talk
That men went down before his spear at a touch,
But knowing he was Lancelot; his great name
Conquer'd; and therefore would he hide his name
From all men, ev'n the King, and to this end
Had made the pretext of a hindering wound,
That he might joust unknown of all, and learn
If his old prowess were in aught decay'd;
And added, "Our true Arthur, when he learns,
Will well allow my pretext, as for gain
Of purer glory."'

Then replied the King:
'Far lovelier in our Lancelot had it been,
In lieu of idly dallying with the truth,
To have trusted me as he hath trusted thee.
Surely his King and most familiar friend
Might well have kept his secret. True, indeed,
Albeit I know my knights fantastical,

So fine a fear in our large Lancelot
Must needs have moved my laughter: now remains
But little cause for laughter: his own kin —
Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him, this! —
His kith and kin, not knowing, set upon him;
So that he went sore wounded from the field:
Yet good news too: for goodly hopes are mine
That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart.
He wore, against his wont, upon his helm
A sleeve of scarlet, broider'd with great pearls,
Some gentle maiden's gift.'

'Yea, lord,' she said,
'Thy hopes are mine,' and saying that, she choked,
And sharply turn'd about to hide her face,
Past to her chamber, and there flung herself
Down on the great King's couch, and writhed upon it,
And clench'd her fingers till they bit the palm,
And shriek'd out 'Traitor' to the unhearing wall,
Then flash'd into wild tears, and rose again,
And moved about her palace, proud and pale.

Gawain the while thro' all the region round
Rode with his diamond, wearied of the quest,
Touch'd at all points, except the poplar grove,
And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat:
Whom glittering in enamell'd arms the maid
Glanced at, and cried, 'What news from Camelot, lord?
What of the knight with the red sleeve?' 'He won.'
'I knew it,' she said. 'But parted from the jousts
Hurt in the side,' whereat she caught her breath;
Thro' her own side she felt the sharp lance go;
Thereon she smote her hand: wellnigh she swoon'd:

And, while he gazed wonderingly at her, came
The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the Prince
Reported who he was, and on what quest
Sent, that he bore the prize and could not find
The victor, but had ridd'n a random round
To seek him, and had wearied of the search.
To whom the Lord of Astolat, 'Bide with us,
And ride no more at random, noble Prince!
Here was the knight, and here he left a shield;
This will he send or come for: furthermore
Our son is with him; we shall hear anon,
Needs must we hear.' To this the courteous Prince
Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
Courtesy with a touch of traitor in it,
And stay'd; and cast his eyes on fair Elaine:
Where could be found face daintier? then her shape
From forehead down to foot, perfect — again
From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd:
'Well — if I bide, lo! this wild flower for me!'
And oft they met among the garden yews,
And there he set himself to play upon her
With sallying wit, free flashes from a height
Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden eloquence
And amorous adulation, till the maid
Rebell'd against it, saying to him, 'Prince,
O loyal nephew of our noble King,
Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
Whence you might learn his name? Why slight your King,
And lose the quest he sent you on, and prove
No surer than our falcon yesterday,
Who lost the hern we slipt her at, and went
To all the winds?' 'Nay, by mine head,' said he,

'I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes;
But an ye will it let me see the shield.'
And when the shield was brought, and Gawain saw
Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with gold,
Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh, and mock'd:
'Right was the King! our Lancelot! that true man!'
'And right was I,' she answer'd merrily, 'I,
Who dream'd my knight the greatest knight of all.'
'And if *I* dream'd,' said Gawain, 'that you love
This greatest knight, your pardon! lo, ye know it!
Speak therefore: shall I waste myself in vain?'
Full simple was her answer, 'What know I?
My brethren have been all my fellowship;
And I, when often they have talk'd of love,
Wish'd it had been my mother, for they talk'd,
Meseem'd, of what they knew not; so myself —
I know not if I know what true love is,
But if I know, then, if I love not him,
I know there is none other I can love.'
'Yea, by God's death,' said he, 'ye love him well,
But would not, knew ye what all others know,
And whom he loves.' 'So be it,' cried Elaine,
And lifted her fair face and moved away:
But he pursued her, calling, 'Stay a little!
One golden minute's grace! he wore your sleeve:
Would he break faith with one I may not name?
Must our true man change like a leaf at last?
Nay — like enow: why then, far be it from me
To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves!
And, damsel, for I deem you know full well
Where your great knight is hidden, let me leave
My quest with you; the diamond also: here!

For if you love, it will be sweet to give it;
And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
From your own hand; and whether he love or not,
A diamond is a diamond. Fare you well
A thousand times! — a thousand times farewell!
Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two
May meet at court hereafter: there, I think,
So ye will learn the courtesies of the court,
We two shall know each other.'

Then he gave,
And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he gave,
The diamond, and all wearied of the quest
Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he went
A true-love ballad, lightly rode away.

Thence to the court he past; there told the King
What the King knew, 'Sir Lancelot is the knight.'
And added, 'Sir, my liege, so much I learnt;
But fail'd to find him, tho' I rode all round
The region: but I lighted on the maid
Whose sleeve he wore; she loves him; and to her,
Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,
I gave the diamond: she will render it;
For by mine head she knows his hiding-place.'

The seldom-frowning King frown'd, and replied,
'Too courteous truly! ye shall go no more
On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget
Obedience is the courtesy due to kings.'

He spake and parted. Wroth, but all in awe,
For twenty strokes of the blood, without a word,

Linger'd that other, staring after him;
Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzz'd abroad
About the maid of Astolat, and her love.
All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues were loosed:
'The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot,
Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat.'
Some read the King's face, some the Queen's, and all
Had marvel what the maid might be, but most
Predoom'd her as unworthy. One old dame
Came suddenly on the Queen with the sharp news.
She, that had heard the noise of it before,
But sorrowing Lancelot should have stoop'd so low,
Marr'd her friend's aim with pale tranquillity.
So ran the tale like fire about the court,
Fire in dry stubble a nine-days' wonder flared:
Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or thrice
Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,
And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
Smiled at each other, while the Queen, who sat
With lips severely placid, felt the knot
Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen
Crush'd the wild passion out against the floor
Beneath the banquet, where the meats became
As wormwood, and she hated all who pledged.

But far away the maid in Astolat,
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
The one-day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face and said,
'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
Is yours who let me have my will, and now,
Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?'

'Nay,' said he, 'surely.' 'Wherefore, let me hence,'
She answer'd, 'and find out our dear Lavaine.'
'Ye will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine:
Bide,' answer'd he: 'we needs must hear anon
Of him, and of that other.' 'Ay,' she said,
'And of that other, for I needs must hence
And find that other, wheresoe'er he be,
And with mine own hand give his diamond to him,
Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
As yon proud Prince who left the quest to me.
Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Death-pale, for lack of gentle maiden's aid.
The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,
My father, to be sweet and serviceable
To noble knights in sickness, as ye know
When these have worn their tokens: let me hence
I pray you.' Then her father nodding said,
'Ay, ay, the diamond: wit ye well, my child,
Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,
Being our greatest: yea, and you must give it —
And sure I think this fruit is hung too high
For any mouth to gape for save a queen's —
Nay, I mean nothing: so then, get you gone,
Being so very wilful you must go.'

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she slipt away,
And while she made her ready for her ride,
Her father's latest word humm'd in her ear,
'Being so very wilful you must go,'
And changed itself and echo'd in her heart,
'Being so very wilful you must die.'
But she was happy enough and shook it off,

As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us;
And in her heart she answer'd it and said,
'What matter, so I help him back to life?'
Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide
Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs
To Camelot, and before the city-gates
Came on her brother with a happy face
Making a roan horse caper and curvet
For pleasure all about a field of flowers:
Whom when she saw, 'Lavaine,' she cried, 'Lavaine,
How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?' He amazed,
'Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lancelot!
How know ye my lord's name is Lancelot?'
But when the maid had told him all her tale,
Then turn'd Sir Torre, and being in his moods
Left them, and under the strange-statued gate,
Where Arthur's wars were render'd mystically,
Past up the still rich city to his kin,
His own far blood, which dwelt at Camelot;
And her, Lavaine across the poplar grove
Led to the caves: there first she saw the casque
Of Lancelot on the wall: her scarlet sleeve,
Tho' carved and cut, and half the pearls away,
Stream'd from it still; and in her heart she laugh'd,
Because he had not loosed it from his helm,
But meant once more perchance to tourney in it.
And when they gain'd the cell wherein he slept,
His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands
Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream
Of dragging down his enemy made them move.
Then she that saw him lying unsleek, unshorn,
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry.

The sound not wonted in a place so still
Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd his eyes
Yet blank from sleep, she started to him, saying,
'Your prize the diamond sent you by the King':
His eyes glisten'd: she fancied 'Is it for me?'
And when the maid had told him all the tale
Of King and Prince, the diamond sent, the quest
Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt
Full lowly by the corners of his bed,
And laid the diamond in his open hand.
Her face was near, and as we kiss the child
That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her face.
At once she slipt like water to the floor.
'Alas,' he said, 'your ride hath wearied you.
Rest must you have.' 'No rest for me,' she said;
'Nay, for near you, fair lord, I am at rest.'
What might she mean by that? his large black eyes,
Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon her,
Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
In the heart's colors on her simple face;
And Lancelot look'd and was perplext in mind,
And being weak in body said no more;
But did not love the color; woman's love,
Save one, he not regarded, and so turn'd
Sighing, and feign'd a sleep until he slept.

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the fields,
And past beneath the weirdly-sculptured gates
Far up the dim rich city to her kin;
There bode the night: but woke with dawn, and past
Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
Thence to the cave: so day by day she past
In either twilight ghost-like to and fro

Gliding, and every day she tended him.
And likewise many a night: and Lancelot
Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little hurt
Whereof he should be quickly whole, at times
Brain-feverous in his heat and agony, seem
Uncourteous, even he: but the meek maid
Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
Milder than any mother to a sick child,
And never woman yet, since man's first fall,
Did kindlier unto man, but her deep love
Upbore her; till the hermit, skill'd in all
The simples and the science of that time,
Told him that her fine care had saved his life.
And the sick man forgot her simple blush,
Would call her friend and sister, sweet Elaine,
Would listen for her coming and regret
Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And loved her with all love except the love
Of man and woman when they love their best,
Closest and sweetest, and had died the death
In any knightly fashion for her sake.
And peradventure had he seen her first
She might have made this and that other world
Another world for the sick man; but now
The shackles of an old love straiten'd him,
His honor rooted in dishonor stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

Yet the great knight in his mid-sickness made
Full many a holy vow and pure resolve.
These, as but born of sickness, could not live:
For when the blood ran lustier in him again,

Full often the bright image of one face,
Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud.
Then if the maiden, while that ghostly grace
Beam'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd not,
Or short and coldly, and she knew right well
What the rough sickness meant, but what this meant
She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd her sight,
And drave her ere her time across the fields
Far into the rich city, where alone
She murmur'd, 'Vain, in vain: it cannot be.
He will not love me: how then? must I die?'
Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plain passage of few notes,
Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid
Went half the night repeating, 'Must I die?'
And now to right she turn'd, and now to left,
And found no ease in turning or in rest;
And 'Him or death,' she mutter'd, 'death or him,'
Again and like a burthen, 'Him or death.'

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt was whole,
To Astolat returning rode the three.
There morn by morn, arraying her sweet self
In that wherein she deem'd she look'd her best,
She came before Sir Lancelot, for she thought
'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall.'
And Lancelot ever prest upon the maid
That she should ask some goodly gift of him
For her own self or hers; 'and do not shun

To speak the wish most near to your true heart;
Such service have ye done me, that I make
My will of yours, and Prince and Lord am I
In mine own land, and what I will I can.'
Then like a ghost she lifted up her face,
But like a ghost without the power to speak.
And Lancelot saw that she withheld her wish,
And bode among them yet a little space
Till he should learn it; and one morn it chanced
He found her in among the garden yews,
And said, 'Delay no longer, speak your wish,
Seeing I go to-day': then out she brake:
'Going? and we shall never see you more.
And I must die for want of one bold word.'
'Speak: that I live to hear,' he said, 'is yours.'
Then suddenly and passionately she spoke:
'I have gone mad. I love you: let me die.'
'Ah, sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this?'
And innocently extending her white arms,
'Your love,' she said, 'your love — to be your wife.'
And Lancelot answer'd, 'Had I chosen to wed,
I had been wedded earlier, sweet Elaine:
But now there never will be wife of mine.'
'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be wife,
But to be with you still, to see your face,
To serve you, and to follow you thro' the world.'
And Lancelot answer'd, 'Nay, the world, the world,
All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
To interpret ear and eye, and such a tongue
To blare its own interpretation — nay,
Full ill then should I quit your brother's love,
And your good father's kindness.' And she said,
'Not to be with you, not to see your face —

Alas for me then, my good days are done.'
'Nay, noble maid,' he answer'd, 'ten times nay!
This is not love: but love's first flash in youth,
Most common: yea, I know it of mine own self:
And you yourself will smile at your own self
Hereafter, when you yield your flower of life
To one more fitly yours, not thrice your age:
And then will I, for true you are and sweet
Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,
More specially should your good knight be poor,
Endow you with broad land and territory
Even to the half my realm beyond the seas,
So that would make you happy: furthermore,
Ev'n to the death, as tho' ye were my blood,
In all your quarrels will I be your knight.
This will I do, dear damsel, for your sake,
And more than this I cannot.'

While he spoke
She neither blush'd nor shook, but deathly-pale
Stood grasping what was nearest, then replied:
'Of all this will I nothing'; and so fell,
And thus they bore her swooning to her tower.

Then spake, to whom thro' those black walls of yew
Their talk had pierced, her father: 'Ay, a flash,
I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead.
Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot.
I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
To blunt or break her passion.'

Lancelot said,
'That were against me: what I can I will';

And there that day remain'd, and toward even
Sent for his shield: full meekly rose the maid,
Stript off the case, and gave the naked shield;
Then, when she heard his horse upon the stones,
Unclasping flung the casement back, and look'd
Down on his helm, from which her sleeve had gone.
And Lancelot knew the little clinking sound;
And she by tact of love was well aware
That Lancelot knew that she was looking at him.
And yet he glanced not up, nor waved his hand,
Nor bade farewell, but sadly rode away.
This was the one discourtesy that he used.

So in her tower alone the maiden sat:
His very shield was gone; only the case,
Her own poor work, her empty labor, left.
But still she heard him, still his picture form'd
And grew between her and the pictured wall.
Then came her father, saying in low tones,
'Have comfort,' whom she greeted quietly.
Then came her brethren saying, 'Peace to thee,
Sweet sister,' whom she answer'd with all calm.
But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant field
Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd; the owls
Wailing had power upon her, and she mixt
Her fancies with the sallow-rifted glooms
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind.

And in those days she made a little song,
And call'd her song 'The Song of Love and Death,'
And sang it: sweetly could she make and sing.

'Sweet is true love tho' given in vain, in vain;
And sweet is death who puts an end to pain:
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'Love, art thou sweet? then bitter death must be:
Love, thou art bitter; sweet is death to me.
O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die.

'Sweet love, that seems not made to fade away,
Sweet death, that seems to make us loveless clay,
I know not which is sweeter, no, not I.

'I fain would follow love, if that could be;
I needs must follow death, who calls for me;
Call and I follow, I follow! let me die.'

High with the last line scaled her voice, and this,
All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
That shook her tower, the brothers heard, and thought
With shuddering, 'Hark the Phantom of the house
That ever shrieks before a death,' and call'd
The father, and all three in hurry and fear
Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light of dawn
Flared on her face, she shrilling, 'Let me die!

And when we dwell upon a word we know,
Repeating, till the word we know so well
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,
So dwelt the father on her face, and thought
'Is this Elaine?' till back the maiden fell,
Then gave a languid hand to each, and lay,
Speaking a still good-morrow with her eyes.
At last she said, 'Sweet brothers, yesternight

I seem'd a curious little maid again,
As happy as when we dwelt among the woods,
And when ye used to take me with the flood
Up the great river in the boatman's boat.
Only ye would not pass beyond the cape
That has the poplar on it: there ye fixt
Your limit, oft returning with the tide.
And yet I cried because ye would not pass
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the King.
And yet ye would not; but this night I dream'd
That I was all alone upon the flood,
And then I said, "Now shall I have my will":
And there I woke, but still the wish remain'd.
So let me hence that I may pass at last
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,
Until I find the palace of the King.
There will I enter in among them all,
And no man there will dare to mock at me;
But there the fine Gawain will wonder at me,
And there the great Sir Lancelot muse at me;
Gawain, who bade a thousand farewells to me,
Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bade me one:
And there the King will know me and my love,
And there the Queen herself will pity me,
And all the gentle court will welcome me,
And after my long voyage I shall rest!'

'Peace,' said her father, 'O my child, ye seem
Light-headed, for what force is yours to go
So far, being sick? and wherefore would ye look
On this proud fellow again, who scorns us all?'

Then the rough Torrę began to heave and move,
And bluster into stormy sobs and say,
'I never loved him: an I meet with him,
I care not howsoever great he be,
Then will I strike at him and strike him down,
Give me good fortune, I will strike him dead,
For this discomfort he hath done the house.'

To whom the gentle sister made reply,
'Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be wroth,
Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault
Not to love me, than it is mine to love
Him of all men who seems to me the highest.'

'Highest?' the father answer'd, echoing 'highest?'
(He meant to break the passion in her) 'nay,
Daughter, I know not what you call the highest;
But this I know, for all the people know it,
He loves the Queen, and in an open shame:
And she returns his love in open shame;
If this be high, what is it to be low?'

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat:
'Sweet father, all too faint and sick am I
For anger: these are slanders: never yet
Was noble man but made ignoble talk.
He makes no friend who never made a foe.
But now it is my glory to have loved
One peerless, without stain: so let me pass,
My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best
And greatest, tho' my love had no return:
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,

Thanks, but you work against your own desire;
For if I could believe the things you say
I should but die the sooner; wherefore cease,
Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and die.'

So when the ghostly man had come and gone,
She with a face, bright as for sin forgiven,
Besought Lavaine to write as she devised
A letter, word for word; and when he ask'd
'Is it for Lancelot, is it for my dear lord?
Then will I bear it gladly'; she replied,
'For Lancelot and the Queen and all the world,
But I myself must bear it.' Then he wrote
The letter she devised; which being writ
And folded, 'O sweet father, tender and true,
Deny me not,' she said — 'ye never yet
Denied my fancies — this, however strange,
My latest: lay the letter in my hand
A little ere I die, and close the hand
Upon it; I shall guard it even in death.
And when the heat has gone from out my heart,
Then take the little bed on which I died
For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's
For richness, and me also like the Queen
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it.
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
To take me to the river, and a barge
Be ready on the river, clothed in black.
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen.
There surely I shall speak for mine own self,
And none of you can speak for me so well.
And therefore let our dumb old man alone

Go with me, he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the doors.'

She ceased: her father promised; whereupon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood.
But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh
Her father laid the letter in her hand,
And closed the hand upon it, and she died.
So that day there was dole in Astolat.

But when the next sun brake from underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows,
Accompanying, the sad chariot-bier
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone
Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest samite, lay.
There sat the lifelong creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face.
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks laid her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with braided blazonings,
And kiss'd her quiet brows, and saying to her
'Sister, farewell for ever,' and again
'Farewell, sweet sister,' parted all in tears.
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,
Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood —
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter — all her bright hair streaming down —
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white

All but her face, and that clear-featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled.

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace craved
Audience of Guinevere, to give at last
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
Hard-won and hardly won with bruise and blow,
With deaths of others, and almost his own,
The nine-years-fought-for diamonds: for he saw
One of her house, and sent him to the Queen
Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed
With such and so unmoved a majesty
She might have seem'd her statue, but that he,
Low-drooping till he wellnigh kiss'd her feet
For loyal awe, saw with a sidelong eye
The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,
In the Queen's shadow, vibrate on the walls,
And parted, laughing in his courtly heart.

All in an oriel on the summer side,
Vine-clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,
They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd, 'Queen,
Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
Take, what I had not won except for you,
These jewels, and make me happy, making them
An armlet for the roundest arm on earth,
Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's
Is tawnier than her cygnet's: these are words:
Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin
In speaking, yet O grant my worship of it
Words, as we grant grief tears. Such sin in words
Perchance, we both can pardon: but, my Queen,

I hear of rumors flying thro' your court.
Our bond, as not the bond of man and wife,
Should have in it an absoluter trust
To make up that defect: let rumors be:
When did not rumors fly? these, as I trust
That you trust me in your own nobleness,
I may not well believe that you believe.'

While thus he spoke, half-turn'd away, the Queen
Brake from the vast oriel-embowering vine
Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,
Till all the place whereon she stood was green;
Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive hand
Received at once and laid aside the gems
There on a table near her, and replied:

'It may be, I am quicker of belief
Than you believe me, Lancelot of the Lake.
Our bond is not the bond of man and wife.
This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill,
It can be broken easier. I for you
This many a year have done despite and wrong
To one whom ever in my heart of hearts
I did acknowledge nobler. What are these?
Diamonds for me! they had been thrice their worth
Being your gift, had you not lost your own.
To loyal hearts the value of all gifts
Must vary as the giver's. Not for me!
For her! for your new fancy. Only this
Grant me, I pray you: have your joys apart.
I doubt not that however changed, you keep
So much of what is graceful: and myself
Would shun to break those bounds of courtesy

In which as Arthur's Queen I move and rule:
So cannot speak my mind. An end to this!
A strange one! yet I take it with Amen.
So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls;
Deck her with these; tell her she shines me down:
An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's
Is haggard, or a necklace for a neck
O as much fairer — as a faith once fair
Was richer than these diamonds — hers not mine —
Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself,
Or hers or mine, mine now to work my will —
She shall not have them.'

Saying which she seized,
And, thro' the casement standing wide for heat,
Flung them, and down they flash'd, and smote the stream.
Then from the smitten surface flash'd, as it were,
Diamonds to meet them, and they past away.
Then while Sir Lancelot leant, in half disdain
At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,
Close underneath his eyes, and right across
Where these had fallen, slowly past the barge
Whereon the lily maid of Astolat
Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night.

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst away
To weep and wail in secret; and the barge,
On to the palace-doorway sliding, paused.
There two stood arm'd, and kept the door; to whom,
All up the marble stair, tier over tier,
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes that ask'd
'What is it?' but that oarsman's haggard face,
As hard and still as is the face that men

Shape to their fancy's eye from broken rocks
On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and they said,
'He is enchanted, cannot speak — and she,
Look how she sleeps — the Fairy Queen, so fair!
Yea, but how pale! what are they? flesh and blood?
Or come to take the King to Fairyland?
For some do hold our Arthur cannot die,
But that he passes into Fairyland.'

While thus they babbled of the King, the King
Came girt with knights: then turn'd the tongueless man
From the half-face to the full eye, and rose
And pointed to the damsel, and the doors.
So Arthur bade the meek Sir Percivale
And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid;
And reverently they bore her into hall.
Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd at her,
And Lancelot later came and mused at her,
And last the Queen herself, and pitied her:
But Arthur spied the letter in her hand,
Stoopt, took, brake seal, and read it; this was all:

'Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the Lake,
I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Hither, to take my last farewell of you.
I loved you, and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my death.
And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,
And to all other ladies, I make moan:
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial.
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
As thou art a knight peerless.'

Thus he read;
And ever in the reading, lords and dames
Wept, looking often from his face who read
To hers whch lay so silent, and at times,
So touch'd were they, half-thinking that her lips,
Who had devised the letter, moved again.
Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them all:
'My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that hear,
Know that for this most gentle maiden's death
Right heavy am I; for good she was and true,
But loved me with a love beyond all love
In women, whomsoever I have known.
Yet to be loved makes not to love again;
Not at my years, however it hold in youth.
I swear by truth and knighthood that I gave
No cause, not willingly, for such a love:
To this I call my friends in testimony,
Her brethren, and her father, who himself
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and use,
To break her passion, some discourtesy
Against my nature: what I could, I did.
I left her and I bade her no farewell;
Tho', had I dreamt the damsel would have died,
I might have put my wits to some rough use,
And help'd her from herself.'

Then said the Queen
(Sea was her wrath, yet working after storm),
'Ye might at least have done her so much grace,
Fair lord, as would have help'd her from her death.'
He raised his head, their eyes met and hers fell,
He adding,

'Queen, she would not be content
Save that I wedded her, which could not be.
Then might she follow me thro' the world, she ask'd;
It could not be. I told her that her love
Was but the flash of youth, would darken down
To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
Toward one more worthy of her — then would I,
More specially were he, she wedded, poor,
Estate them with large land and territory
In mine own realm beyond the narrow seas,
To keep them in all joyance: more than this
I could not; this she would not, and she died.'

He pausing, Arthur answer'd, 'O my knight,
It will be to thy worship, as my knight,
And mine, as head of all our Table Round,
To see that she be buried worshipfully.'

So toward that shrine which then in all the realm
Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went
The marshall'd Order of their Table Round,
And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
And mass, and rolling music, like a queen.
And when the knights had laid her comely head
Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
Then Arthur spake among them, 'Let her tomb
Be costly, and her image thereupon,
And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet
Be carven, and her lily in her hand.
And let the story of her dolorous voyage
For all true hearts be blazon'd on her tomb

In letters gold and azure!' which was wrought
Thereafter; but when now the lords and dames
And people, from the high door streaming, brake
Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
Who mark'd Sir Lancelot where he moved apart,
Drew near, and sigh'd in passing, 'Lancelot,
Forgive me; mine was jealousy in love.'
He answer'd with his eyes upon the ground,
'That is love's curse; pass on, my Queen, forgiven.'
But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,
Approach'd him, and with full affection said,

'Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom I have
Most joy and most affiance, for I know
What thou hast been in battle by my side,
And many a time have watch'd thee at the tilt
Strike down the lusty and long-practised knight,
And let the younger and unskill'd go by
To win his honor and to make his name,
And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
Made to be loved; but now I would to God,
Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
Thou couldst have loved this maiden, shaped, it seems,
By God for thee alone, and from her face,
If one may judge the living by the dead,
Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
Who might have brought thee, now a lonely man
Wifeless and heirless, noble issue, sons
Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the Lake.'

Then answer'd Lancelot, 'Fair she was, my King,
Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be.

To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,
To doubt her pureness were to want a heart —
Yea, to be loved, if what is worthy love
Could bind him, but free love will not be bound.'

'Free love, so bound, were freëst,' said the King.
'Let love be free; free love is for the best:
And, after heaven, on our dull side of death,
What should be best, if not so pure a love
Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee
She fail'd to bind, tho' being, as I think,
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know.'

And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but he went,
And at the inrunning of a little brook
Sat by the river in a cove, and watch'd
The high reed wave, and lifted up his eyes
And saw the barge that brought her moving down,
Far-off, a blot upon the stream, and said
Low in himself, 'Ah, simple heart and sweet,
Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
Far tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for thy soul?
Ay, that will I. Farewell too — now at last —
Farewell, fair lily. "Jealousy in love?"
Not rather dead love's harsh heir, jealous pride?
Queen, if I grant the jealousy as of love,
May not your crescent fear for name and fame
Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?
Why did the King dwell on my name to me?
Mine own name shames me, seeming a reproach,
Lancelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
Caught from his mother's arms — the wondrous one
Who passes thro' the vision of the night —

She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns
Heard on the winding waters, eve and morn
She kiss'd me saying, " Thou art fair, my child,
As a king's son," and often in her arms
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere.
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er it be!
For what am I? what profits me my name
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and have it:
Pleasure to have it, none; to lose it, pain;
Now grown a part of me: but what use in it?
To make men worse by making my sin known?
Or sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?
Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
Not after Arthur's heart! I needs must break
These bonds that so defame me: not without
She wills it: would I, if she will'd it? nay,
Who knows? but if I would not, then may God,
I pray him, send a sudden Angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me far,
And fling me deep in that forgotten mere,
Among the tumbled fragments of the hills.'

So groan'd Sir Lancelot in remorseful pain,
Not knowing he should die a holy man.

THE HOLY GRAIL

From noiseful arms, and acts of prowess done
In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,
Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd The Pure,
Had pass'd into the silent life of prayer,
Praise, fast, and alms; and leaving for the cowl
The helmet in an abbey far away
From Camelot, there, and not long after, died.

And one, a fellow-monk among the rest,
Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the rest,
And honor'd him, and wrought into his heart
A way by love that waken'd love within,
To answer that which came: and as they sat
Beneath a world-old yew-tree, darkening half
The cloisters, on a gustful April morn
That puff'd the swaying branches into smoke
Above them, ere the summer when he died,
The monk Ambrosius question'd Percivale:

'O brother, I have seen this yew-tree smoke,
Spring after spring, for half a hundred years:
For never have I known the world without,
Nor ever stray'd beyond the pale: but thee,
When first thou camest — such a courtesy
Spake thro' the limbs and in the voice — I knew
For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall;
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,

Some true, some light, but every one of you
Stamp'd with the image of the King; and now
Tell me, what drove thee from the Table Round,
My brother? was it earthly passion crost?'

'Nay,' said the knight; 'for no such passion mine.
But the sweet vision of the Holy Grail
Drove me from all vainglories, rivalries,
And earthly heats that spring and sparkle out
Among us in the jousts, while women watch
Who wins, who falls; and waste the spiritual strength
Within us, better offer'd up to Heaven.'

To whom the monk: 'The Holy Grail! — I trust
We are green in Heaven's eyes; but here too much
We molder — as to things without I mean —
Yet one of your own knights, a guest of ours,
Told us of this in our refectory,
But spake with such a sadness and so low
We heard not half of what he said. What is it?
The phantom of a cup that comes and goes?'

'Nay, monk! what phantom?' answer'd Percivale.
'The cup, the cup itself, from which our Lord
Drank at the last sad supper with his own.
This, from the blessed land of Aromat —
After the day of darkness, when the dead
Went wandering o'er Moriah — the good saint
Arimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our Lord.
And there awhile it bode; and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heal'd at once,

By faith, of all his ills. But then the times
Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to Heaven, and disappear'd.'

To whom the monk: 'From our old books I know
That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
And there the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to build;
And there he built with wattles from the marsh
A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but seem
Mute of this miracle, far as I have read.
But who first saw the holy thing to-day?'

'A woman,' answer'd Percivale, 'a nun,
And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister; and if ever holy maid
With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid; tho' never maiden glow'd,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human love,
Which being rudely blunted, glanced and shot
Only to holy things; to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms. And yet,
Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous race,
Across the iron grating of her cell
Beat, and she pray'd and fasted all the more.

'And he to whom she told her sins, or what
Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,

Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro' five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time. And when King Arthur made
His Table Round, and all men's hearts became
Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come again;
But sin broke out. Ah, Christ, that it would come,
And heal the world of all their wickedness!
"O Father!" ask'd the maiden, "might it come
To me by prayer and fasting?" "Nay," said he,
"I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow."
And so she pray'd and fasted, till the sun
Shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and I thought
She might have risen and floated when I saw her.

'For on a day she sent to speak with me.
And when she came to speak, behold her eyes
Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness.
And "O my brother Percivale," she said,
"Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail:
For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound
As of a silver horn from o'er the hills
Blown, and I thought, 'It is not Arthur's use
To hunt by moonlight'; and the slender sound
As from a distance beyond distance grew
Coming upon me — O never harp nor horn,
Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,
Was like that music as it came; and then
Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver beam,
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,

Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive,
Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed
With rosy colors leaping on the wall;
And then the music faded, and the Grail
Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the walls
The rosy quiverings died into the night.
So now the Holy Thing is here again
Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray,
And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,
That so perchance the vision may be seen
By thee and those, and all the world be heal'd."

'Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this
To all men; and myself fasted and pray'd
Always, and many among us many a week
Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost,
Expectant of the wonder that would be.

'And one there was among us, ever moved
Among us in white armor, Galahad.
"God make thee good as thou art beautiful,"
Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight; and none
In so young youth, was ever made a knight
Till Galahad; and this Galahad, when he heard
My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze;
His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd
Hers, and himself her brother more than I.

'Sister or brother none had he; but some
Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said
Begotten by enchantment — chatterers they,
Like birds of passage piping up and down,
That gape for flies — we know not whence they come;
For when was Lancelot wanderingly lewd?

'But she, the wan sweet maiden, shore away
Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair
Which made a silken mat-work for her feet;
And out of this she plaited broad and long
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thread
And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beam;
And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,
Saying, "My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,
O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,
I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt.
Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,
And break thro' all, till one will crown thee king
Far in the spiritual city": and as she spake
She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Thro' him, and made him hers, and laid her mind
On him, and he believed in her belief.

'Then came a year of miracle: O brother,
In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,
Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,
And carven with strange figures; and in and out
The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll
Of letters in a tongue no man could read.
And Merlin call'd it "The Siege perilous,"
Perilous for good and ill; "for there," he said,
"No man could sit but he should lose himself":
And once by misadvertence Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost; but he,
Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,
Cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself!"

'Then on a summer night it came to pass,
While the great banquet lay along the hall,
That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair.

'And all at once, as there we sat, we heard
A cracking and a riving of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overhead
Thunder, and in the thunder was a cry.
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear than day:
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail
All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it past.
But every knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and sware a vow.

'I sware a vow before them all, that I,
Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride
A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
Until I found and saw it, as the nun
My sister saw it; and Galahad sware the vow,
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin, sware,
And Lancelot sware, and many among the knights,
And Gawain sware, and louder than the rest.'

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking him,
'What said the King? Did Arthur take the vow?'

'Nay, for my lord,' said Percivale, 'the King,
Was not in hall: for early that same day
Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit hold,

An outraged maiden sprang into the hall
Crying on help: for all her shining hair
Was smear'd with earth, and either milky arm
Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all she wore
Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn
In tempest: so the King arose and went
To smoke the scandalous hive of those wild bees
That made such honey in his realm. Howbeit
Some little of this marvel he too saw,
Returning o'er the plain that then began
To darken under Camelot; whence the King
Look'd up, calling aloud, "Lo, there! the roofs
Of our great hall are roll'd in thunder-smoke!
Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the bolt."
For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
As having there so oft with all his knights
Feasted, and as the stateliest under heaven.

'O brother, had you known our mighty hall,
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,
Tower after tower, spire beyond spire,
By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing brook,
Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin built.
And four great zones of sculpture, set betwixt
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall:
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with growing wings,
And over all one statue in the mold
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,

And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern Star.
And eastward fronts the statue, and the crown
And both the wings are made of gold, and flame
At sunrise till the people in far fields,
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
Behold it, crying, "We have still a King."

'And, brother, had you known our hall within,
Broader and higher than any in all the lands!
Where twelve great windows blazon Arthur's wars,
And all the light that falls upon the board
Streams thro' the twelve great battles of our King.
Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount and mere,
Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur.
And also one to the west, and counter to it,
And blank: and who shall blazon it? when and how? —
O there, perchance, when all our wars are done,
The brand Excalibur will be cast away.

'So to this hall full quickly rode the King,
In horror lest the work by Merlin wrought,
Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish, wrapt
In unremorseful folds of rolling fire.
And in he rode, and up I glanced, and saw
The golden dragon sparkling over all:
And many of those who burnt the hold, their arms
Hack'd, and their foreheads grimed with smoke, and sear'd,
Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours,
Full of the vision, prest: and then the King
Spake to me, being nearest, "Percivale"
(Because the hall was all in tumult — some
Vowing, and some protesting), "what is this?"

'O brother, when I told him what had chanced,
My sister's vision, and the rest, his face
Darken'd, as I have seen it more than once,
When some brave deed seem'd to be done in vain,
Darken; and "Woe is me, my knights," he cried,
"Had I been here, ye had not sworn the vow."
Bold was mine answer, "Had thyself been here,
My King, thou wouldst have sworn." "Yea, yea," said he,
"Art thou so bold and hast not seen the Grail?"

'"Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I saw the light,
But since I did not see the Holy Thing,
I sware a vow to follow it till I saw."

'Then when he ask'd us, knight by knight, if any
Had seen it, all their answers were as one:
"Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn our vows."

'"Lo now," said Arthur, "have ye seen a cloud?
What go ye into the wilderness to see?"

'Then Galahad on the sudden, and in a voice
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call'd,
"But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
'O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me.'"

'"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the King, "for such
As thou art is the vision, not for these.
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—
Holier is none, my Percivale, than she—
A sign to maim this Order which I made.
But ye, that follow but the leader's bell"
(Brother, the King was hard upon his knights),

"Taliessin is our fullest throat of song,
And one hath sung and all the dumb will sing.
Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
Five knights at once, and every younger knight,
Unproven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till overborne by one, he learns — and ye,
What are ye? Galahads? — no, nor Percivales"
(For thus it pleased the King to range me close
After Sir Galahad); "nay," said he, "but men
With strength and will to right the wrong'd, of power
To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles splash'd and dyed
The strong White Horse in his own heathen blood —
But one hath seen, and all the blind will see.
Go, since your vows are sacred, being made:
Yet — for ye know the cries of all my realm
Pass thro' this hall — how often, O my knights,
Your places being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come and go
Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering fires
Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, yea most,
Return no more: ye think I show myself
Too dark a prophet: come now, let us meet
The morrow morn once more in one full field
Of gracious pastime, that once more the King,
Before ye leave him for this Quest, may count
The yet-unbroken strength of all his knights,
Rejoicing in that Order which he made."

So when the sun broke next from under ground,
All the great table of our Arthur closed
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,
So many lances broken — never yet

Had Camelot seen the like, since Arthur came;
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
Was in us from the vision, overthrew
So many knights that all the people cried,
And almost burst the barriers in their heat,
Shouting, "Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale!'

'But when the next day brake from under ground —
O brother, had you known our Camelot,
Built by old kings, age after age, so old
The King himself had fears that it would fall,
So strange, and rich, and dim; for where the roofs
Totter'd toward each other in the sky,
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watch'd us pass; and lower, and where the long
Rich galleries, lady-laden, weigh'd the necks
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers of flowers
Fell as we past; and men and boys astride
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
At all the corners, named us each by name,
Calling "God speed!" but in the ways below
The knights and ladies wept, and rich and poor
Wept, and the King himself could hardly speak
For grief, and all in middle street the Queen,
Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd aloud,
"This madness has come on us for our sins."
So to the Gate of the three Queens we came,
Where Arthur's wars are render'd mystically,
And thence departed every one his way.

'And I was lifted up in heart, and thought
Of all my late-shown prowess in the lists,

How my strong lance had beaten down the knights,
So many and famous names; and never yet
Had heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth so green,
For all my blood danced in me, and I knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail.

'Thereafter, the dark warning of our King,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
Came like a driving gloom across my mind.
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, "This Quest is not for thee."
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death;
And I, too, cried, "This Quest is not for thee."

'And on I rode, and when I thought my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then a brook,
With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white
Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave,
And took both ear and eye; and o'er the brook
Were apple-trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns. "I will rest here,"
I said, "I am not worthy of the Quest";
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things at once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns.

'And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning; and fair the house whereby she sat,

And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious; and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say,
"Rest here"; but when I touch'd her, lo! she, too,
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed,
And in it a dead babe; and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone.

'And on I rode, and greater was my thirst.
Then flash'd a yellow gleam across the world,
And where it smote the plowshare in the field,
The plowman left his plowing, and fell down
Before it; where it glitter'd on her pail,
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell down
Before it, and I knew not why, but thought
"The sun is rising," tho' the sun had risen.
Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armor with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels; and his horse
In golden armor jewell'd everywhere:
And on the splendor came, flashing me blind;
And seem'd to me the Lord of all the world,
Being so huge. But when I thought he meant
To crush me, moving on me, lo! he, too,
Open'd his arms to embrace me as he came,
And up I went and touch'd him, and he, too,
Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And wearying in a land of sand and thorns.

'And I rode on and found a mighty hill,
And on the top, a city wall'd: the spires
Prick'd with incredible pinnacles into heaven.

And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd; and these
Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Percivale!
Thou mightiest and thou purest among men!"
And glad was I and clomb, but found at top
No man, nor any voice. And thence I past
Far thro' a ruinous city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there; but there I found
Only one man of an exceeding age.
"Where is that goodly company," said I,
"That so cried out upon me?" and he had
Scarce any voice to answer, and yet gasp'd,
"Whence and what art thou?" and even as he spoke
Fell into dust, and disappear'd, and I
Was left alone once more, and cried in grief,
"Lo, if I find the Holy Grail itself
And touch it, it will crumble into dust."

'And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,
Low as the hill was high, and where the vale
Was lowest, found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,
To whom I told my phantoms, and he said:

'"O son, thou hast not true humility,
The highest virtue, mother of them all;
For when the Lord of all things made Himself
Naked of glory for His mortal change,
'Take thou my robe,' she said, 'for all is thine,'
And all her form shone forth with sudden light
So that the angels were amazed, and she
Follow'd Him down, and like a flying star
Led on the gray-hair'd wisdom of the east;
But her thou hast not known: for what is this

Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy sins?
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad." When the hermit made an end,
In silver armor suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chapel door
Laid lance, and enter'd, and we knelt in prayer.
And there the hermit slaked my burning thirst,
And at the sacring of the mass I saw
The holy elements alone; but he,
"Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw the Grail,
The Holy Grail, descend upon the shrine:
I saw the fiery face as of a child
That smote itself into the bread, and went;
And hither am I come; and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to see,
This Holy Thing, fail'd from my side, nor come
Cover'd, but moving with me night and day,
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red. And in the strength of this I rode,
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,
And past thro' Pagan realms, and made them mine,
And clash'd with Pagan hordes, and bore them down,
And broke thro' all, and in the strength of this
Come victor. But my time is hard at hand,
And hence I go; and one will crown me king
Far in the spiritual city; and come thou, too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go."

While thus he spake, his eye, dwelling on mine,
Drew me, with power upon me, till I grew

One with him, to believe as he believed.
Then, when the day began to wane, we went.

'There rose a hill that none but man could climb,
Scarr'd with a hundred wintry watercourses —
Storm at the top, and when we gain'd it, storm
Round us and death; for every moment glanced
His silver arms and gloom'd: so quick and thick
The lightnings here and there to left and right
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us, dead,
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire: and at the base we found
On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
Part black, part whiten'd with the bones of men,
Not to be crost, save that some ancient king
Had built a way, where, link'd with many a bridge,
A thousand piers ran into the great Sea.
And Galahad fled along them bridge by bridge,
And every bridge as quickly as he crost
Sprang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I yearn'd
To follow; and thrice above him all the heavens
Open'd and blazed with thunder such as seem'd
Shoutings of all the sons of God: and first
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
In silver-shining armor starry-clear;
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud.
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
If boat it were — I saw not whence it came.
And when the heavens open'd and blazed again
Roaring, I saw him like a silver star —
And had he set the sail, or had the boat

Become a living creature clad with wings?
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Redder than any rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been withdrawn.
Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and straight beyond the star
I saw the spiritual city and all her spires
And gateways in a glory like one pearl —
No larger, tho' the goal of all the saints —
Strike from the sea; and from the star there shot
A rose-red sparkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the Holy Grail,
Which never eyes on earth again shall see.
Then fell the floods of heaven drowning the deep.
And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge
No memory in me lives; but that I touch'd
The chapel-doors at dawn I know; and thence
Taking my war-horse from the holy man,
Glad that no phantom vext me more, return'd
To whence I came, the gate of Arthur's wars.'

'O brother,' ask'd Ambrosius, — 'for in sooth
These ancient books — and they would win thee — teem,
Only I find not there this Holy Grail,
With miracles and marvels like to these,
Not all unlike; which oftentime I read,
Who read but on my breviary with ease,
Till my head swims; and then go forth and pass
Down to the little thorpe that lies so close,
And almost plaster'd like a martin's nest
To these old walls — and mingle with our folk;
And knowing every honest face of theirs

As well as ever shepherd knew his sheep,
And every homely secret in their hearts,
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,
And ills and aches, and teethings, lyings-in,
And mirthful sayings, children of the place,
That have no meaning half a league away:
Or lulling random squabbles when they rise,
Chafferings and chatterings at the market-cross,
Rejoice, small man, in this small world of mine,
Yea, even in their hens and in their eggs —
O brother, saving this Sir Galahad,
Came ye on none but phantoms in your quest,
No man, no woman?'

Then Sir Percivale:

'All men, to one so bound by such a vow,
And women were as phantoms. O my brother,
Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee
How far I falter'd from my quest and vow?
For after I had lain so many nights,
A bedmate of the snail and eft and snake,
In grass and burdock, I was changed to wan
And meagre, and the vision had not come;
And then I chanced upon a goodly town
With one great dwelling in the middle of it;
Thither I made, and there was I disarm'd
By maidens each as fair as any flower:
But when they led me into hall, behold,
The Princess of that castle was the one,
Brother, and that one only, who had ever
Made my heart leap; for when I moved of old
A slender page about her father's hall,
And she a slender maiden, all my heart

Went after her with longing: yet we twain
Had never kiss'd a kiss, or vow'd a vow.
And now I came upon her once again,
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,
And all his land and wealth and state were hers.
And while I tarried, every day she set
A banquet richer than the day before
By me; for all her longing and her will
Was toward me as of old; till one fair morn,
I walking to and fro beside a stream
That flash'd across her orchard underneath
Her castle-walls, she stole upon my walk,
And calling me the greatest of all knights,
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first time,
And gave herself and all her wealth to me.
Then I remember'd Arthur's warning word,
That most of us would follow wandering fires,
And the Quest faded in my heart. Anon,
The heads of all her people drew to me,
With supplication both of knees and tongue:
"We have heard of thee: thou art our greatest knight,
Our Lady says it, and we well believe:
Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land."
O me, my brother! but one night my vow
Burnt me within, so that I rose and fled,
But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own self,
And ev'n the Holy Quest, and all but her;
Then after I was join'd with Galahad
Cared not for her, nor anything upon earth.'

Then said the monk, 'Poor men, when yule is cold,
Must be content to sit by little fires.

And this am I, so that ye care for me
Ever so little; yea, and blest be Heaven
That brought thee here to this poor house of ours
Where all the brethren are so hard, to warm
My cold heart with a friend: but O the pity
To find thine own first love once more — to hold,
Hold her a wealthy bride within thine arms,
Or all but hold, and then — cast her aside,
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed.
For we that want the warmth of double life,
We that are plagued with dreams of something sweet
Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich, —
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthly-wise,
Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,
But live like an old badger in his earth,
With earth about him everywhere, despite
All fast and penance. Saw ye none beside,
None of your knights?'

'Yea so,' said Percivale:
'One night my pathway swerving east, I saw
The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bors
All in the middle of the rising moon:
And toward him spurr'd, and hail'd him, and he me,
And each made joy of either; then he ask'd,
"Where is he? hast thou seen him — Lancelot? — Once,"
Said good Sir Bors, "he dash'd across me — mad,
And maddening what he rode: and when I cried,
'Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest
So holy,' Lancelot shouted, 'Stay me not!
I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,
For now there is a lion in the way.'
So vanish'd."

'Then Sir Bors had ridden on
Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,
Because his former madness, once the talk
And scandal of our table, had return'd;
For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him
That ill to him is ill to them; to Bors
Beyond the rest: he well had been content
Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have seen,
The Holy Cup of healing; and, indeed,
Being so clouded with his grief and love,
Small heart was his after the Holy Quest:
If God would send the vision, well: if not,
The Quest and he were in the hands of Heaven.

'And then, with small adventure met, Sir Bors
Rode to the lonest tract of all the realm,
And found a people there among their crags,
Our race and blood, a remnant that were left
Paynim amid their circles, and the stones
They pitch up straight to heaven: and their wise men
Were strong in that old magic which can trace
The wandering of the stars, and scoff'd at him
And this high Quest as at a simple thing:
Told him he follow'd — almost Arthur's words —
A mocking fire: "What other fire than he,
Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom blows,
And the sea rolls, and all the world is warm'd?"
And when his answer chafed them, the rough crowd,
Hearing he had a difference with their priests,
Seized him, and bound and plunged him into a cell
Of great piled stones; and lying bounden there
In darkness thro' innumerable hours
He heard the hollow-ringing heavens sweep

Over him till by miracle — what else? —
Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and fell,
Such as no wind could move: and thro' the gap
Glimmer'd the streaming scud: then came a night
Still as the day was loud; and thro' the gap
The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round —
For, brother, so one night, because they roll
Thro' such a round in heaven, we named the stars,
Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King —
And these, like bright eyes of familiar friends,
In on him shone: "And then to me, to me,"
Said good Sir Bors, "beyond all hopes of mine,
Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for myself —
Across the seven clear stars — O grace to me —
In color like the fingers of a hand
Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail
Glided and past, and close upon it peal'd
A sharp quick thunder." Afterwards, a maid,
Who kept our holy faith among her kin
In secret, entering, loosed and let him go.'

To whom the monk: 'And I remember now
That pelican on the casque: Sir Bors it was
Who spake so low and sadly at our board;
And mighty reverent at our grace was he:
A square-set man and honest; and his eyes,
An out-door sign of all the warmth within,
Smiled with his lips — a smile beneath a cloud,
But heaven had meant it for a sunny one:
Ay, ay, Sir Bors, who else? But when ye reach'd
The city, found ye all your knights return'd,
Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy,
Tell me, and what said each, and what the King?'

Then answer'd Percivale: 'And that can I,
Brother, and truly; since the living words
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King
Pass not from door to door and out again,
But sit within the house. O, when we reach'd
The city, our horses stumbling as they trode
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cockatrices,
And shatter'd talbots, which had left the stones
Raw, that they fell from, brought us to the hall.

'And there sat Arthur on the daïs-throne,
And those that had gone out upon the Quest,
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of them,
And those that had not, stood before the King,
Who, when he saw me, rose, and bade me hail,
Saying, "A welfare in thine eye reproves
Our fear of some disastrous chance for thee
On hill, or plain, at sea, or flooding ford.
So fierce a gale made havoc here of late
Among the strange devices of our kings;
Yea, shook this newer, stronger hall of ours,
And from the statue Merlin molded for us
Half-wrench'd a golden wing; but now — the Quest,
This vision — hast thou seen the Holy Cup,
That Joseph brought of old to Glastonbury?"

'So when I told him all thyself hast heard,
Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
To pass away into the quiet life,
He answer'd not, but, sharply turning, ask'd
Of Gawain, "Gawain, was this Quest for thee?"

'"Nay, lord," said Gawain, "not for such as I.
Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
Who made me sure the Quest was not for me;
For I was much awearied of the Quest:
But found a silk pavilion in a field,
And merry maidens in it; and then this gale
Tore my pavilion from the tenting-pin,
And blew my merry maidens all about
With all discomfort; yea, and but for this,
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant to me."

'He ceased; and Arthur turn'd to whom at first
He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering, push'd
Athwart the throng to Lancelot, caught his hand,
Held it, and there, half-hidden by him, stood,
Until the King espied him, saying to him,
"Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grail"; and Bors,
"Ask me not, for I may not speak of it:
I saw it"; and the tears were in his eyes.

'Then there remain'd but Lancelot, for the rest
Spake but of sundry perils in the storm;
Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,
Our Arthur kept his best until the last;
"Thou, too, my Lancelot," ask'd the King, "my friend,
Our mightiest, hath this Quest avail'd for thee?"

'"Our mightiest!" answer'd Lancelot, with a groan;
"O King!" — and when he paused, methought I spied
A dying fire of madness in his eyes —
"O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier are those that welter in their sin,

Swine in the mud, that cannot see for slime,
Slime of the ditch: but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,
Noble, and knightly in me twined and clung
Round that one sin, until the wholesome flower
And poisonous grew together, each as each,
Not to be pluck'd asunder; and when thy knights
Sware, I sware with them only in the hope
That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
They might be pluck'd asunder. Then I spake
To one most holy saint, who wept and said,
That save they could be pluck'd asunder, all
My quest were but in vain; to whom I vow'd
That I would work according as he will'd.
And forth I went, and while I yearn'd and strove
To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
My madness came upon me as of old,
And whipt me into waste fields far away;
There was I beaten down by little men,
Mean knights, to whom the moving of my sword
And shadow of my spear had been enow
To scare them from me once; and then I came
All in my folly to the naked shore,
Wide flats, where nothing but coarse grasses grew;
But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
Ye could not hear the waters for the blast,
Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the sea
Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
Swept like a river, and the clouded heavens
Were shaken with the motion and the sound.
And blackening in the sea-foam sway'd a boat.
Half-swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a chain;

And in my madness to myself I said,
'I will embark and I will lose myself,
And in the great sea wash away my sin.'
I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat.
Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
And with me drove the moon and all the stars;
And the wind fell, and on the seventh night
I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
And felt the boat shock earth, and looking up,
Behold, the enchanted towers of Carbonek,
A castle like a rock upon a rock,
With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
And steps that met the breaker! there was none
Stood near it but a lion on each side
That kept the entry, and the moon was full.
Then from the boat I leapt, and up the stairs.
There drew my sword. With sudden-flaring manes
Those two great beasts rose upright like a man,
Each gript a shoulder, and I stood between;
And, when I would have smitten them, heard a voice,
'Doubt not, go forward; if thou doubt, the beasts
Will tear thee piecemeal.' Then with violence
The sword was dash'd from out my hand, and fell.
And up into the sounding hall I past;
But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,
No bench nor table, painting on the wall
Or shield of knight; only the rounded moon
Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea.
But always in the quiet house I heard,
Clear as a lark, high o'er me as a lark,
A sweet voice singing in the topmost tower
To the eastward: up I climb'd a thousand steps
With pain: as in a dream I seem'd to climb

For ever: at the last I reach'd a door,
A light was in the crannies, and I heard,
'Glory and joy and honor to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail.'
Then in my madness I essay'd the door;
It gave; and thro' a stormy glare, a heat
As from a seventimes-heated furnace, I,
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
With such a fierceness that I swoon'd away —
O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings and eyes.
And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I saw
That which I saw; but what I saw was veil'd
And cover'd; and this Quest was not for me."

'So speaking, and here ceasing, Lancelot left
The hall long silent, till Sir Gawain — nay,
Brother, I need not tell thee foolish words, —
A reckless and irreverent knight was he,
Now bolden'd by the silence of his King, —
Well, I will tell thee: "O King, my liege," he said,
"Hath Gawain fail'd in any quest of thine?
When have I stinted stroke in foughten field?
But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,
Thy holy nun and thou have driven men mad,
Yea, made our mightiest madder than our least.
But by mine eyes and by mine ears I swear,
I will be deafer than the blue-eyed cat,
And thrice as blind as any noonday owl,
To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
Henceforward."

'"Deafer," said the blameless King,
"Gawain, and blinder unto holy things
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,
Being too blind to have desire to see.
But if indeed there came a sign from heaven,
Blessed are Bors, Lancelot and Percivale,
For these have seen according to their sight.
For every fiery prophet in old times,
And all the sacred madness of the bard,
When God made music thro' them, could but speak
His music by the framework and the chord;
And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth.

'"Nay — but thou errest, Lancelot: never yet
Could all of true and noble in knight and man
Twine round one sin, whatever it might be,
With such a closeness, but apart there grew,
Save that he were the swine thou spakest of,
Some root of knighthood and pure nobleness;
Whereto see thou, that it may bear its flower.

'"And spake I not too truly, O my knights?
Was I too dark a prophet when I said
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
That most of them would follow wandering fires,
Lost in the quagmire? — lost to me and gone,
And left me gazing at a barren bard,
And a lean Order — scarce return'd a tithe —
And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw;
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And leaving human wrongs to right themselves,
Cares but to pass into the silent life.

And one hath had the vision face to face,
And now his chair desires him here in vain,
However they may crown him otherwhere.

'"And some among you held, that if the King
Had seen the sight he would have sworn the vow:
Not easily, seeing that the King must guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind
To whom a space of land is given to plow.
Who may not wander from the allotted field
Before his work be done; but, being done,
Let visions of the night or of the day
Come, as they will; and many a time they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not light,
This air that smites his forehead is not air
But vision — yea, his very hand and foot —
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again: ye have seen what ye have seen."

'So spake the King: I knew not all he meant.'

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

That story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the knights,
Told, when the man was no more than a voice
In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other minds.

For on their march to westward, Bedivere,
Who slowly paced among the slumbering host,
Heard in his tent the moanings of the King:

'I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His fields,
But in His ways with men I find Him not.
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die.
O me! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful?
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and dim,
And have not power to see it as it is:
Perchance, because we see not to the close;—
For I, being simple, thought to work His will,
And have but stricken with the sword in vain;
And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm

Reels back into the beast, and is no more.
My God, thou hast forgotten me in my death:
Nay — God my Christ — I pass but shall not die.'

Then, ere that last weird battle in the west,
There came on Arthur sleeping, Gawain kill'd
In Lancelot's war, the ghost of Gawain blown
Along a wandering wind, and past his ear
Went shrilling, 'Hollow, hollow all delight!
Hail, King! to-morrow thou shalt pass away.
Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee.
And I am blown along a wandering wind,
And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight.'
And fainter onward, like wild birds that change
Their season in the night and wail their way
From cloud to cloud, down the long wind the dream
Shrill'd; but in going mingled with dim cries
Far in the moonlit haze among the hills,
As of some lonely city sack'd by night,
When all is lost, and wife and child with wail
Pass to new lords; and Arthur woke and call'd,
'Who spake? A dream. O light upon the wind,
Thine, Gawain, was the voice — are these dim cries
Thine? or doth all that haunts the waste and wild
Mourn, knowing it will go along with me?'

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and spake:
'O me, my King, let pass whatever will,
Elves, and the harmless glamor of the field;
But in their stead thy name and glory cling
To all high places like a golden cloud
For ever: but as yet thou shalt not pass.
Light was Gawain in life, and light in death

Is Gawain, for the ghost is as the man;
And care not thou for dreams from him, but rise —
I hear the steps of Modred in the west,
And with him many of thy people, and knights
Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but grosser grown
Than heathen, spitting at their vows and thee.
Right well in heart they know thee for the King.
Arise, go forth and conquer as of old.'

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'Far other is this battle in the west
Whereto we move, than when we strove in youth,
And brake the petty kings, and fought with Rome,
Or thrust the heathen from the Roman wall,
And shook him thro' the north. Ill doom is mine
To war against my people and my knights.
The king who fights his people fights himself.
And they my knights, who loved me once, the stroke
That strikes them dead is as my death to me.
Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way
Thro' this blind haze, which ever since I saw
One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
Hath folded in the passes of the world.'

Then rose the King and moved his host by night,
And ever push'd Sir Modred, league by league,
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse —
A land of old upheaven from the abyss
By fire, to sink into the abyss again;
Where fragments of forgotten peoples dwelt,
And the long mountains ended in a coast
Of ever-shifting sand, and far away
The phantom circle of a moaning sea.

There the pursuer could pursue no more,
And he that fled no further fly the King;
And there, that day when the great light of heaven
Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,
On the waste sand by the waste sea they closed
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the west.
A deathwhite mist slept over sand and sea:
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed it, drew
Down with his blood, till all his heart was cold
With formless fear; and ev'n on Arthur fell
Confusion, since he saw not whom he fought.
For friend and foe were shadows in the mist,
And friend slew friend not knowing whom he slew;
And some had visions out of golden youth,
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
Look in upon the battle; and in the mist
Was many a noble deed, many a base,
And chance and craft and strength in single fights,
And ever and anon with host to host
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the hard mail hewn,
Shield-breakings, and the clash of brands, the crash
Of battleaxes on shatter'd helms, and shrieks
After the Christ, of those who falling down
Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the mist;
And shouts of heathen and the traitor knights,
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blasphemies,
Sweat, writhings, anguish, laboring of the lungs
In that close mist, and cryings for the light,
Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead.

Last, as by some one deathbed after wail
Of suffering, silence follows, or thro' death

Or deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore,
Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
A dead hush fell; but when the dolorous day
Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came
A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew
The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale King glanced across the field
Of battle: but no man was moving there;
Nor any cry of Christian heard thereon,
Nor yet of heathen; only the wan wave
Brake in among dead faces, to and fro
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down
Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,
And shiver'd brands that once had fought with Rome,
And rolling far along the gloomy shores
The voice of days of old and days to be.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,
And whiter than the mist that all day long
Had held the field of battle was the King:

'Hearest thou this great voice that shakes the world,
And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move,
And beats upon the faces of the dead,
My dead, as tho' they had not died for me?—
O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fall'n
Confusion, till I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be King,
Behold, I seem but King among the dead.'

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere: 'My King,
King everywhere! and so the dead have kings,
There also will I worship thee as King.

Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live
Who love thee; but who hates thee, he that brought
The heathen back among us, yonder stands,
Modred unharm'd, the traitor of thine house.'

Then spake the King: 'My house hath been my doom.
But call not thou this traitor of my house
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me.
My house are rather they who sware my vows,
Yea, even while they brake them, own'd me King.
And well for thee, saying in my dark hour,
When all the purport of my throne hath fail'd,
That quick or dead thou holdest me for King.
King am I, whatsoever be their cry;
And one last act of knighthood shalt thou see
Yet, ere I pass.' And uttering this the King
Made at the man: then Modred smote his liege
Hard on that helm which many a heathen sword
Had beaten thin; while Arthur at one blow,
Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and all but slain himself, he fell.

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea;
Until King Arthur's Table, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonesse about their lord,
King Arthur. Then, because his wound was deep,
The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a broken cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land:
On one side lay the Ocean, and on one
Lay a great water, and the moon was full.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'The sequel of to-day unsolders all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights
Whereof this world holds record. Such a sleep
They sleep — the men I loved. I think that we
Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly deeds,
Walking about the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were.
I perish by this people which I made, —
Tho' Merlin sware that I should come again
To rule once more; but, let what will be, be,
I am so deeply smitten thro' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn.
Thou therefore take my brand Excalibur,
Which was my pride: for thou rememberest how
In those old days, one summer noon, an arm
Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
Holding the sword — and how I row'd across
And took it, and have worn it, like a king;
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In aftertime, this also shall be known:
But now delay not: take Excalibur,
And fling him far into the middle mere:
Watch what thou seëst, and lightly bring me word.'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro' the helm —
A little thing may harm a wounded man;
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.'

So saying, from the ruin'd shrine he stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam. He, stepping down
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,
And o'er him, drawing it, the winter moon,
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt:
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth-work
Of subtlest jewellery. He gazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he stood,
This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw: but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd
There in the many-knotted waterflags,
That whistled stiff and dry about the marge.
So strode he back slow to the wounded King.

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere:
'Hast thou perform'd my mission which I gave?
What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the ripple washing in the reeds,
And the wild water lapping on the crag.'

To whom replied King Arthur, faint and pale:
'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy name.

Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fëalty, nor like a noble knight:
For surer sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the mere.
This is a shameful thing for men to lie.
Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me word.'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the mere,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in thought;
But when he saw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chased, he smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud:

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of many men.
What good should follow this, if this were done?
What harm, undone? Deep harm to disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.
Were it well to obey then, if a king demand
An act unprofitable, against himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what he does.
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty breath
And rumors of a doubt? But were this kept,
Stored in some treasure-house of mighty kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excalibur,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the Lake.

Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the deeps
Upon the hidden bases of the hills."
So might some old man speak in the aftertime
To all the people, winning reverence.
But now much honor and much fame were lost.'

So spake he, clouded with his own conceit,
And hid Excalibur the second time,
And so strode back slow to the wounded King.

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing heavily:
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast heard?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long ripple washing in the reeds.'

To whom replied King Arthur, much in wrath:
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknightly, traitor-hearted! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will. I see thee what thou art,
For thou, the latest-left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
Thou wouldst betray me for the precious hilt;
Either from lust of gold, or like a girl
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes.
Yet, for a man may fail in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee hence:
But, if thou spare to fling Excalibur,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands.'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly, plunged

Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it. The great brand
Made lightnings in the splendor of the moon,
And flashing round and round, and whirl'd in an arch,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter shock
By night, with noises of the Northern Sea.
So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibur:
But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.
And lightly went the other to the King.

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing thicker breath:
'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done.
Speak out: what is it thou hast heard, or seen?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedivere:
'Sir King, I closed mine eyelids, lest the gems
Should blind my purpose, for I never saw,
Nor shall see, here or elsewhere, till I die,
Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
So great a miracle as yonder hilt.
Then with both hands I flung him, wheeling him;
But when I look'd again, behold an arm,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
That caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd him
Three times, and drew him under in the mere.'

And answer made King Arthur, breathing hard:
'My end draws nigh; 't is time that I were gone.
Make broad thy shoulders to receive my weight,

And bear me to the margin; yet I fear
My wound hath taken cold, and I shall die.

So saying, from the pavement he half rose,
Slowly, with pain, reclining on his arm,
And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
As in a picture. Him Sir Bedivere
Remorsefully regarded thro' his tears,
And would have spoken, but he found not words;
Then took with care, and kneeling on one knee,
O'er both his shoulders drew the languid hands,
And rising bore him thro' the place of tombs.

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted hard,
Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
When all the house is mute. So sigh'd the King,
Muttering and murmuring at his ear, 'Quick, quick!
I fear it is too late, and I shall die.'
But the other swiftly strode from ridge to ridge,
Clothed with his breath, and looking, as he walk'd,
Larger than human on the frozen hills.
He heard the deep behind him, and a cry
Before. His own thought drove him like a goad.
Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
And barren chasms, and all to left and right
The bare black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels —
And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
And the long glories of the winter moon.

Then saw they how there hove a dusky barge,
Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
Beneath them; and descending they were ware

That all the decks were dense with stately forms,
Black-stoled, black-hooded, like a dream — by these
Three Queens with crowns of gold: and from them rose
A cry that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
And, as it were one voice, an agony
Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the world.

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in the barge.'
So to the barge they came. There those three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King, and wept.
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shatter'd casque, and chafed his hands,
And call'd him by his name, complaining loud,
And dropping bitter tears against a brow
Striped with dark blood: for all his face was white
And colorless, and like the wither'd moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the springing east;
And all his greaves and cuisses dash'd with drops
Of onset; and the light and lustrous curls —
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the daïs-throne — were parch'd with dust;
Or clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that fringed his lips.
So like a shatter'd column lay the King;
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings.

Then loudly cried the bold Sir Bedivere:
'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?

Where shall I hide my forehead and my eyes?
For now I see the true old times are dead,
When every morning brought a noble chance,
And every chance brought out a noble knight.
Such times have been not since the light that led
The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh.
But now the whole Round Table is dissolved
Which was an image of the mighty world,
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the years,
Among new men, strange faces, other minds.'

And slowly answer'd Arthur from the barge:
'The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways,
Lest one good custom should corrupt the world,
Comfort thyself: what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I have done
May He within himself make pure! but thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul. More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of. Wherefore, let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day.
For what are men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind life within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of prayer
Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of God.
But now farewell. I am going a long way
With these thou seëst — if indeed I go
(For all my mind is clouded with a doubt) —
To the island-valley of Avilion;

Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow.
Nor ever wind blows loudly; but it lies
Deep-meadow'd, happy, fair with orchard lawns
And bowery hollows crown'd with summer sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous wound.'

So said he, and the barge with oar and sail
Moved from the brink, like some full-breasted swan
That, fluting a wild carol ere her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes the flood
With swarthy webs. Long stood Sir Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of dawn,
And on the mere the wailing died away.

But when that moan had past for evermore,
The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn
Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King is gone.'
And therewithal came on him the weird rhyme,
'From the great deep to the great deep he goes.'

Whereat he slowly turn'd and slowly clomb
The last hard footstep of that iron crag;
Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet, and cried,
'He passes to be King among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes again; but — if he come no more —
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black boat,
Who shriek'd and wail'd, the three whereat we gazed
On that high day, when, clothed with living light,
They stood before his throne in silence, friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his need?'

Then from the dawn it seem'd there came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some fair city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars.

Thereat once more he moved about, and clomb
Ev'n to the highest he could climb, and saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bare the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light.
And the new sun rose bringing the new year.

NOTES

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

1 1 Leodogran: one of the "petty kings" alluded to in l. 5.

1 1 Cameliard: "Astolat, Cameliard . . . and other places . . . lie quite beyond geographical identification."—Jones.

1 5 Arthur: historically considered a British chieftain who lived in the sixth century. After uniting the Britons and fighting many battles against the "heathen host" he was killed at Camlan, A.D. 537, and buried at Glastonbury.

1 8 heathen host: German tribes, consisting of Jutes, Saxons, and Angles, called elsewhere the "White Horse." These invaders finally became the real English people.

1 9 harried: plundered, harassed.

1 13 Aurelius: Ambrosius Aurelianus was emperor of Britain, Gaul, and Spain, under Honorius (about 440). The Arthurian legends make him brother of Uther, whom he preceded on the throne.

1 14 Uther: Arthur's predecessor and reputed father.

1 17 Table Round: Leodogran received the Round Table from Uther and sent it to Arthur as a wedding gift. It seated one hundred and fifty knights, but Merlin, who was sent in search, could find in Arthur's kingdom only twenty-eight worthy to sit around it. "Merlin made the Round Table in tokening of roundness of the world" (Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, XIV, ii). See also *The Passing of Arthur*, ll. 402–403. The table being round, there was no distinction in the places assigned to the knights.

2 32 wolflike men: compare the story of Romulus and Remus and that of Kipling's *Mowgli*.

2 36 Urien: following Malory, Tennyson first called him Rience. He was the husband of Arthur's sister, Morgan le Fay, one of the three queens alluded to below (l. 275). He wanted Arthur's beard to trim a mantle made entirely of the beards of kings he had killed. He was finally defeated by Arthur and his allies.

2 50 **golden symbol**: see note on *Lancelot and Elaine*, l. 422.

3 58 **drave**: drove.

3 59 **after**: afterward. — **beast**: wild dog, wolf, bear, etc.

3 72 **Gorlois**: Duke of Tintagil in Cornwall; Trevena.

3 73 **Anton**: a knight known by Malory as Sir Ector.

3 75 **Travail**: his newborn love for Guinevere.

3 82 **shudder**: the twinkling of the stars seems a shuddering as if in sympathy with the King.

4 94 **who tells the tale**: may mean Tennyson or some earlier author.

4 99 **high day**: noontime. On rare occasions the morning star may be seen after sunrise.

4 102 **clarions**: small, high-pitched trumpets. — **shrilling unto blood**: calling to battle. — **blood**: explain the figure of speech.

4 103 **long-lanced**: the knights carried long lances. A transferred epithet. — **battle**: mounted knights. Explain the figure (metonymy).

4 106 **Powers**: God or gods.

4–5 115–123 Sir Thomas Malory causes Merlin to stop the battle. His story is as follows: "With that came Merlin on a great black horse and said unto Arthur, Thou hast never done! Hast thou not done enough? of three score thousand this day hast thou left alive but fifteen thousand, and it is time to say Ho! For God is wroth with thee, that thou wilt never have done: for yonder eleven kings at this time will not be overthrown, but an thou tarry on them any longer, thy fortune will turn and they shall increase. . . . It is well said, quoth Arthur, and as thou hast devised, so shall it be done" (*Le Morte Darthur*, I, xvii).

5 124 **whom he loved**: Lancelot. Notice that the first knight to be introduced is the one Arthur loved most and the one destined to undermine the Round Table.

5 127 **liege**: liege lord, or one to whom a man was bound to service, being exempt from service to any one else, even a king.

5 130 **warded**: defended, protected, guarded.

5 132 **Man's word is God in man**: Tennyson uses this same wording in *Balin and Balan*, 8. Compare the popular expression: "A promise must not be profaned," and *Lancelot and Elaine*, ll. 143–144.

5 133 **I trust thee to the death**: certainly Arthur considered his promise sacred, as later events proved. Lancelot swore love, and while he wronged Arthur, we still feel his love for his King to the end. Even when Arthur made war on him,

> He spared to lift his hand against the King.
>
> *Guinevere*, l. 434

5 134 **foughten field**: Tennyson is fond of this expression. See *The Holy Grail*, l. 857.

5 135 **Ulfius, and Brastias**: knights who fought on Arthur's side in the great battle. — **Bedivere**: "First made and latest left of all the knights." See *The Passing of Arthur*.

5 141 **holp**: old form for "helped."

5 142 **saving**: excepting.

5 144 **chamberlain**: the office of chamberlain was a high one in European states. The duties varied from those of a waiter to those of a treasurer.

6 150 **Merlin**:

> the most famous man of all those times,
> Merlin, who knew the range of all their arts,
> Had built the King his havens, ships, and halls,
> Was also Bard, and knew the starry heavens;
> The people call'd him Wizard.
>
> *Merlin and Vivien*, ll. 164–168

6 152 **Bleys**: the historian of King Arthur's time. "And so Bleise [Bleys] wrote the battle word by word as Merlin told him, how it began, and by whom, and in likewise how it was ended, and who had the worse" (Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, I, xvii). Tennyson regards him as another wizard and Merlin's master. See below, ll. 359–363.

6 157 **annal-book**: chronicle book in which current events were recorded.

6 160 **had I been holpen**: Leodogran means: "If Arthur had not helped me better by his fighting than you have by your answer, I would have been slain." Compare l. 141.

6 166 **cuckoo chased by lesser fowl**: as the cuckoo often lays its eggs in the nests of other birds, even the smaller ones, warned by instinct, try to defend their nests from this intruder.

7 187 **Ygerne**: as the wife of Gorloïs she became the mother of Bellicent; as the wife of Uther she became the mother of Arthur. Queen Elaine of Garlot and Queen Morgan le Fay seem to be of this same family.

7 189 **Bellicent**: queen of Orkney and half sister to Arthur.

7 207 **wrack**: wreck.

8 211 **Was Arthur born**: for another account of the birth of Arthur, see ll. 358–392. — **all**: used emphatically, but adds nothing to the meaning.

8 215 **this**: syntax?

9 244 **Orkney**: a group of islands north of Scotland.

9 247 A doubtful throne is ice on summer seas: Leodogran fears his kingdom may melt like ice in a warm sea.

9 252 enow: enough.

9 257 daïs: a platform at one end of a room, on which seats were placed for distinguished persons. In this case, Arthur's throne.

10 274 vert: green.

10 275 three fair queens: "one was King Arthur's sister, Queen Morgan le Fay; the other was the Queen of Northgales; the third was the Queen of the Waste Lands" (Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, XXI, vi). These queens may typify Charity, Abstinence, and Truth, or Faith, Hope, and Charity.

10 279 mage: magician or wise man.

10 282 Lady of the Lake: Merlin and Arthur "came to a lake, the which was a fair water and broad, and in the midst of the lake Arthur was ware of an arm clothed in white samite, that held a fair sword in that hand. Lo! said Merlin, yonder is that sword that I spake of. With that they saw a damosel going upon the lake. What damosel is that? said Arthur. That is the Lady of the Lake, said Merlin; and within that lake is a rock, and therein is as fair a place as any on earth, and richly beseen; and this damosel will come to you anon, and then speak ye fair to her that she will give you that sword. . . . Well! said the damosel, go ye into yonder barge, and row yourself to the sword, and take it and the scabbard with you" (Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, I, xxv). See also *Lancelot and Elaine*, ll. 1392–1400. In the allegory, the Lady of the Lake may mean religion.

10 284 samite: a silk fabric, the threads of which had six fibers each.

10 285 sword: Excalibur. See *The Passing of Arthur*, ll. 220–230. The word means "cut steel." The great heroes of romance have each been provided with a magic sword. Roland's was called "Durandal"; Siegfried's, "Balmung"; Sigurd's, "Wrath"; Arthur's, "Excalibur." Allegorically, Excalibur may be the weapon used by the soul in a spiritual warfare.

10 288 minster: church.

10 298 elfin: relating to the elves or fairies. — **Urim:** in Old Testament language the Urim may have been jewels put in the "breastplate of judgment" (Exodus xxviii, 30). The hilt of Excalibur was decorated with fairy jewels.

10 301 oldest tongue: Hebrew.

11 319 Gawain: note the character of Gawain as foreshadowed in these three lines. This element is the prevailing one throughout the

poem. Some Arthurian story-tellers have given Gawain a much more important part to play in the affairs of his King. See the English romance of *Syr Gawayne and the Grene Knyghte.*

11 322 **Modred**: as in the case of Gawain, the first characteristic the poet gives to Modred is the one that develops into treason and makes him a traitor to the King. Some of the old legends make Modred the son of Arthur and his half sister, Bellicent, the King at the time not knowing she was related to him. Yet Nemesis follows, and this knight finally strikes the King a fatal blow. See *The Passing of Arthur*, l. 165.

11 324 **Struck for the throne**:

> For hither had she fled, her cause of flight
> Sir Modred; he that like a subtle beast
> Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,
> Ready to spring, waiting a chance: for this
> He chill'd the popular praises of the King
> With silent smiles of slow disparagement;
> And tamper'd with the Lords of the White Horse,
> Heathen, the brood by Hengist left; and sought
> To make disruption in the Table Round
> Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
> Serving his traitorous end.
>
> *Guinevere*, ll. 9–19

> This night, a rumor wildly blown about
> Came, that Sir Modred had usurp'd the realm.
>
> *Guinevere*, ll. 151–152

See also *The Passing of Arthur*, ll. 80, 151–153, 164–169.

11 329 **this King is fair**:

> His hair, a sun that ray'd from off a brow
> Like hill-snow high in heaven, the steel-blue eyes,
> The golden beard that clothed his lips with light.
>
> *The Last Tournament*, ll. 661–663

12 362 **fairy changeling**: "It was at one time a common superstition, that infants were taken from their cradles by fairies, who left instead their own weakly and starveling elves. The children so left were called *changelings*, and were known by their peevishness, and their backwardness in walking and speaking." — Chambers.

13 368 **still**: dead.

13 379 **a ninth one**: the Welsh tradition made every ninth wave larger than the others. The Romans considered the tenth the largest. Some people still hold that every third wave of the ocean has more volume than the others.

13 383 **A naked babe**: in *Guinevere* (l. 291), the version reads:

They found a naked child upon the sands.

rode: floated.

13 392 **part**: depart.

13 393 **seer**: a "see-er," one who sees; a prophet.

14 401 **riddling triplets**: in the days of magicians a more or less common form of wizard prophecy. See below, l. 481, and note. See also *Gareth and Lynette*, l. 280.

14 405 **lea**: a plain, meadow, or pasture.

14 410 **From the great deep**: see *The Passing of Arthur*, l. 445.

15 431 **the hind fell, the herd was driven**: a figurative way of saying that the peasants were slain and their cattle driven away.

15 432 **rick**: a stack of grain or hay.

15 451 **Among the flowers, in May**: see *Lancelot and Elaine*, l. 104. In *Guinevere*, ll. 382–388, we read:

> they,
> Rapt in sweet talk or lively, all on love
> And sport and tilts and pleasure, — for the time
> Was may-time, and as yet no sin was dream'd, —
> Rode under groves that look'd a paradise
> Of blossom, over sheets of hyacinth
> That seem'd the heavens upbreaking thro' the earth.

15 452 **Dubric**: the Archbishop of Caerleon, primate of Britain and the papal legate.

> And oft I talk'd with Dubric, the high saint,
> Who, with mild heat of holy oratory,
> Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness
> Which, when it weds with manhood, makes a man.
> *Geraint and Enid*, ll. 864–867

15 454 **altar-shrines**: of St. Stephen's.

16 472 **Other**: better.

16 481–501 **Blow trumpet, etc.**: "As a piece of glorious literature, there is the marriage and coronation song of the knights. It was not in the first draft of *The Coming of Arthur*. It embodies the thought of the poem, grips the whole meaning of it together. And its sound is the sound of martial triumph, of victorious weapons in battle, and of knights in arms. We hear in the carefully varied chorus, in the very rattle and shattering of the vowels in the words, the beating of axe on helm and shaft on shield. Rugged, clanging, clashing lines — it is

a splendid effort of art. . . . We hear its contrast in Merlin's song, as soft and flowing as the other was braying and broken, and we think with gratitude of the artist who could do both with equal ease. The graciousness of the rivulet-music and soft play of Nature is in the lines of this delicate song, and the gaiety of youth; and mingled with these the deep favorite thought of Tennyson of the preëxistence of the soul." — Stopford A. Brooke, *Tennyson: His Art and Relation to Modern Life*, pp. 273–274.

17 504 **slowly-fading mistress**: an especially expressive phrase for indicating the gradual decline of the Roman Empire.

17 505 **of yore**: in times past. England continued to be a province of the Roman Empire down to about 410 A.D., when the Roman army was withdrawn from Britain. Even after that, from time to time, Roman officials appeared to gather tribute from the Britons.

17 506 **Behold . . . pay**: the kings of Britain agreed with Arthur to make war upon Rome. Arthur, leaving Modred in charge of his kingdom, made war upon the Romans. After a number of encounters, the Britons were victorious, Lucius Tiberius being killed.

17 508 **The old order changeth**: see *The Passing of Arthur*, l. 408.

17 511 **Roman wall**: the Romans constructed a massive wall across Britain, to keep the northern barbarians away. The ruins are still objects of interest.

18 517 **twelve great battles**: see *Lancelot and Elaine*, ll. 284–305, and note.

GARETH AND LYNETTE

19 1 **Lot**: king of Orkney. — **Bellicent**: see *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 189, and note.

19 2 **Gareth**: nephew to King Arthur. Malory causes Sir Kay to dub him Beaumains or Fairhands, and describes him as "large, and long, and broad in the shoulders, and well-visaged, and the fairest and largest hand that ever man saw" (*Le Morte Darthur*, VII, i). — **spring**: in the allegory of "The Year" Gareth and Lynette represent the springtime. See Introduction, p. xxii.

19 3 **spate**: a flood or freshet.

19 18 **yield**: reward.

19 20 **discaged**: uncaged. The figure begins with l. 14.

19 25 **Gawain**: son to Bellicent, brother to Gareth.

19 26 **Modred**: see *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 322, and note.

19 27 **proven**: tried or put to test.

20 32 **sullen**: this word foreshadows. Modred finally proves a traitor to his King.

20 40 **An**: if. — **goose and golden eggs**: for the story, see Tennyson's poem, *The Goose*.

20 46 **Book of Hours**: a book which contained the prayers prescribed by the Church for the various hours of the day or week. The pages of the book were illuminated with gilded initials and pictures.

20 47 **haunting**: lingering.

20 51 **leash of kings**: three or more. Originally leash meant the line with which the hunter held his three greyhounds; then by metonymy it came to be used for the hounds themselves, and later for a pack of hounds.

20 56 **clomb**: climbed. — **brake**: broke.

21 66 **Excalibur**: see *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 294–308.

21 76 **the Barons' war**: see *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 62–71 and 100–132.

21 85 **jousts**: military contests where two knights on horseback attacked each other with blunted lances. See Scott's account of a tournament in *Ivanhoe*.

21 88 **tourney**: a contest of armed men with swords, lances, or other weapons.

22 90 **burns**: streams.

22 105 **good lack**: good Lord.

22 116 **follow the Christ**: in speaking of the oath he exacted from his knights, King Arthur is made to say:

> I made them lay their hands in mine and swear
> To reverence the King, as if he were
> Their conscience, and their conscience as their King,
> To break the heathen and uphold the Christ,
> To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
> To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
> To honor his own word as if his God's,
> To lead sweet lives in purest chastity,
> To love one maiden only, cleave to her,
> And worship her by years of noble deeds,
> Until they won her.
>
> *Guinevere*, ll. 464–474

23 128 **cloud that settles round his birth**: see *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 178–182, 204–214, 364–385.

23 131 **yield**: allow.

23 133–134 **who swept,** etc.: Arthur was King of Britain in the sixth century. The Romans abandoned England early in the fifth. Thus Arthur "swept the dust of ruined Rome from off the threshold of the realm," and met and defeated the invading Saxons. He was the champion of Christianity against the surrounding heathen "idolaters."

24 151 **knaves:** boys or servants.

24 152 **bar:** a rail or board, across which food was passed from the kitchen into the dining room.

24 157 **villain** (adj.): slavish; **villain** (noun): a member of the lowest unfree class of serfs.

24 162 **thrall:** slave.

24 172 **Perplext:** interfered with.

25 185 **Camelot:** "On the latest limit of the West, in the land of Lyonnesse, where save the rocky Isles of Scilly, all is now wild sea, rose the sacred Mount of Camelot. It rose from the deeps, with gardens and bowers, and palaces, and at the top of the mount was King Arthur's hall and the holy minster with the cross of gold" (a prose sketch found among Tennyson's papers, quoted by Dr. Vlymen). "Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces, is everywhere symbolic of the gradual growth of human beliefs and institutions, and of the spiritual development of man" (Tennyson, *Memoirs*, II, 127).

25 187 **Royal mount:** "The Mount was the most beautiful in the world, sometimes green and fresh in the beam of morning, sometimes all one splendor, folded in the golden mists of the West. But all underneath was hollow and the mountain trembled, when the seas rushed bellowing through the porphyry caves; and there ran a prophecy that the mountain and the city on some wild morning would topple into the abyss and be no more." — Tennyson, quoted by Vlymen.

25 202 **glamor:** enchantment.

26 212 **Lady of the Lake:** see *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 282–293, and note.

26 219 **sacred fish:** "St. Augustine notices that the Greek word for a fish [ΙΧΘΥΣ], which, containing the initial letters of the name and titles [Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, Θεοῦ Υἱός, Σωτήρ, meaning Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour] of Christ, had been adopted by the Early Church as its sacred symbol, contains also the initial letters of some prophetic lines ascribed to the Sibyl of Erythræ." — Lecky, *History of European Morals*, I, 376–377, third edition, revised.

26 225 **three Queens:** see *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 275–278. See also Tennyson, *Memoirs*, II, 127.

26 229 **boughts**: coils.

27 249–251 The seer is describing a mirage, an optical illusion apparently elevating objects into the sky and inverting them.

27 256 **sacred mountain-cleft**: Parnassus; in Greek mythology the home of Apollo and the Muses.

27 258 **And built it to the music of their harps**: so, legend says, Apollo built Troy.

> Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
> While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.
>
> *Tithonus*, ll. 62, 63

28 271 **enow**: enough.

28 280 **Riddling of the Bards**: an example of a "riddling triplet" may be found in *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 402–410.

28 287 **brook**: endure.

28 293 **she, nor I**: give the syntax.

29 298 **did their days in stone**: inscribed their deeds on stone.

29 314 **delivering doom**: passing decrees or administering justice.

29 321 **ranged**: stood in order.

30 333 **Whether**: which of two.

30 337 **Uther**: see *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 14, and note.

30 339 **say**: report.

30 340 **who**: give the syntax.

30 348 **held with these**: sided with the barons.

30 351 **standeth seized**: a legal term, meaning "put in possession of, by being next heir at law."

30 355 **wreak**: avenge.

31 359 **Sir Kay**: King Arthur's foster brother. — **seneschal**: steward.

31 362 **gyve**: fetter. — **gyve and gag**: send her to the ducking stool, the punishment for a woman who could not control her tongue.

31 366 **had**: would have.

31 367 **Aurelius Emrys**: see *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 13, and note.

31 380 **charlock**: wild mustard.

32 386 **Tristram**: Sir Tristram of Lyonesse was nephew to King Mark, the word "cousin" being used in its older sense of kinsman. He was in love with Mark's wife, Iseult (i-sölt').

32 398 **blazon'd**: given their heraldic colors.

32 411 **reave**: deprive.

33 419 **churl**: a peasant.

33 422 **lap him up in cloth of lead**: roll him in his coffin, in those days made of lead.

33 423 **craven:** a mean coward.

33 445 **lichen:** a plant that often fastens itself to rock or stone or root. It will corrode the hardest rock or kill the thriftiest plant.

34 447 **wot:** knows. — **brewis:** broth or pottage.

34 451 **Lancelot:** see *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 124–131.

34 465 **Sir Fair-hands:** Beaumains is the name put in the mouth of Sir Kay by Malory. It means "fair hands." See l. 2, note.

35 476 **broach:** spit, to which a piece of meat was fastened for roasting before an open fire.

35 489 **tarns:** mountain lakes.

35 490 **Caer-Eryri:** Snowdon Field. "Caer" is a Welsh prefix meaning "wall," "fort," or "castle"; "Eryri" is the Welsh name of Snowdon, the highest mountain peak in Wales or in England.

35 492 **Isle Avilion** (ȧ-vil′yon, or, for the sake of the rhythm here, ȧ-vil′i-on″): literally, the "Isle of Apples." "In Celtic mythology, the Land of the Blessed, or Isle of Souls, an earthly paradise in the western seas" (Century Cyclopedia of Names). See *The Passing of Arthur*, ll. 427–432.

36 519 **Between the in-crescent and de-crescent moon:** at the time of the full moon.

36 524 **ragged oval:** the boundary of their play lists.

36 528 **from Satan's foot to Peter's knee:** St. Peter kept the keys of the gate of Heaven. The meaning, then, is from Sir Kay's tyranny (Hell) to King Arthur's favor (Heaven).

36 529 **news:** now used as a singular noun though plural in form.

38 571 **lions:** the heraldic device on Lancelot's shield.

> And when the shield was brought, and Gawain saw
> Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with gold,
> Ramp in the field.
>
> *Lancelot and Elaine*, ll. 658–660

38 573 **hall:** the mighty hall of Arthur is described in *The Holy Grail*, 225 ff.

38 575 **May-blossom:** the white hawthorn which blossoms in May.

> The lanes, you know, were white with may.
>
> Tennyson, *The Miller's Daughter*

38 586 **best blood:** the wine used at the sacrament, typical of Christ's blood.

39 607 **or a holy life:** or become a nun.

40 642 **May-white**: hawthorn blossom or color of the hawthorn blossom.

40 646 **lane of access**: passage to the King between the rows of knights.

41 665 **maiden shield**: the shield of an unproved knight. — **casque**: helmet.

41 678 **trenchant**: sharpened.

42 688 **being named**: called by name.

42 693 **hath past his time**: has reached his dotage.

43 729 **foul-flesh'd agaric in the holt**: decayed or ill-smelling fungus in the wood. The mushroom belongs to the agaricoid fungi. — **holt**: a grove.

43 742 **shingle**: waterworn stones, coarser than gravel.

44 749 **unhappiness**: mischance.

44 751 **loon**: stupid fellow.

44 766 **beknaved**: called knave.

45 773 **evensong**: vespers.

45 778 **mere**: a stagnant pool.

45 799 **caitiff**: wicked.

46 804 **wan**: gloomy.

46 828 **cate**: a dainty article of food.

46 829 **peacock**: when the peacock was served at table, in the days of knight-errantry, "All the guests, male and female, took a solemn vow; the knights vowing bravery, and the ladies engaging to be loving and faithful" (quoted by Rolfe). Lynette is thus reminded of her duty as a lady.

47 839 **frontless**: shameless.

48 862 **avail**: advantage.

48 870 **allow**: accept.

48 871 **stoat**: ermine. The lion and the ermine have been companions on the same small island.

48 873 **ruth**: pity.

48 881 **hers**: Cinderella's.

49 889 **Lent-lily in hue**: yellow, the color of the daffodil, or Lent lily, which is so called because it blossoms about the Lenten season.

49 908 **Avanturine**: a variety of feldspar, spangled with scales of mica.

50 922 **liefer had I**: I had rather.

50 934 **lightly**: quickly.

51 948 **grovelling**: flat on the ground, face downward, in an humiliating attitude.

51 971 **morning star**: Lynette is changing. Love for Gareth is entering her heart, though she is too proud to withdraw the epithets with which she has "beknaved" him.

52 979 **fool's parable**: foolish parable of the day — the "Morning-Star, and Noon-Sun, and Evening-Star."

52 996 **worship**: respect.

52 1002 **shallow**: stream. — **flower**: the dandelion.

53 1008 **brother**: Gareth, having the shield of Morning-Star, is mistaken by Noon-Sun for his brother. — **marches**: the borderlands, or boundaries, of his district.

53 1012 **vizoring**: covering with the visor of his helmet.

53 1013 **cipher**: round and meaningless.

53 1026 **Myself when I return will plead for thee**: Gareth is a true knight. His antagonist fell because of an accident to his horse. Knightly courtesy demanded that he be dealt with as an unfortunate. Gareth not only rescued him from the stream but promised to plead for him at Arthur's court.

54 1048 **the boar hath rosemaries and bay**: the boar's head, when served before the king, is garnished not with flowers but with rosemaries (evergreens) and bay (laurel).

54 1052 **mavis**: song thrush. — **merle**: European blackbird.

54 1060 **treble bow**: three spans.

55 1067 **wrapt in harden'd skins**: in the allegory these hardened skins may be taken to mean the evil habits of a lifetime.

55 1075 **disaster**: etymologically this word means "ill star" or "evil star."

56 1099 **Foredooming**: foreboding or apprehending or fearing.

56 1118 **buoy**: the object of "can bring under," the understood predicate of "Southwesterns."

57 1130 **trefoil**: clover.

57 1146 **sooth**: truth.

58 1163 **comb**: a "bowl-shaped hollow or valley inclosed on all sides but one by steep and in some cases perpendicular cliffs" (Century Dictionary).

58 1172 **vexillary**: a Roman standard bearer. The reference is to certain Latin inscriptions made by a Roman standard bearer on the cliffs above the river Gelt in Cumberland.

58 1174–1175 **Phosphorus**: the Greek for "morning star." — **Meridies**: the Latin for "midday." — **Hesperus**: the Greek for "evening star." — **Nox**. the Latin for "night." — **Mors**: the Latin for "death."

62 1273 **Ramp:** rear or spring up.

62 1281 **Arthur's harp:** Gareth was studying the stars. Some believe that the constellation called Arthur's Harp was the one known as Lyra, consisting of three stars, Vega, Arcturus, and Polaris, arranged in the shape of a triangle. Dr. Rolfe, quoting the lines from *The Last Tournament*,

> Dost thou know the star
> We call the harp of Arthur up in heaven?

infers that the Harp was a single star and not a constellation. The star Arcturus, constellation Boötes, is known as Arthur's Hufe (haunt). Dr. Vlymen says that the reference here is to the Great Bear.

64 1348 **fleshless laughter:** the grinning skull of Death.

65 1367 **blink:** shut their eyes to.

65 1386 **Then sprang the happier day from underground:** in the allegory spring has come, and the plant life rises again from its season of death.

65 1392 **he:** Malory, the author of *Le Morte Darthur*.

65 1394 **he:** Tennyson.

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

66 2 **Astolat:** the Arthurian name for Guildford in Surrey.

66 4 **sacred:** to Elaine.

66 8 **braided:** embroidered.

66 10 **tinct:** tint. — **wit:** skill or fancy.

66 22 **Caerlyle:** Carlisle in Cumberland.

66 23 **Caerleon:** in Monmouthshire, where King Arthur, according to tradition, held his court. — **Camelot:** described in *Gareth and Lynette*, ll. 296 ff.

67 35 **Lyonesse:** the mythical land from which Arthur came and the birthplace of Sir Tristram.

> A land of old upheaven from the abyss
> By fire, to sink into the abyss again.
>
> *The Passing of Arthur*, ll. 82–83

Now, "it is said to be more than forty fathoms under water between the Land's End and the isles of Scilly, the sea having gradually encroached upon the land" (Century Cyclopedia of Names).

67 36 **tarn:** see note on *Gareth and Lynette*, l. 489.

67 50 **nape:** the back, upper part of the neck.

67 53 **shingly scaur** (skär): a steep cliff covered with loose water-worn stones.

68 59 **Divinely**: by the guidance of God, or providentially.

68 67 **still**: every year.

68 69 **Queen**: Guinevere, whose relations with Lancelot had by this time become a subject for gossip among the knights and ladies of the Round Table.

68 75 **place**: London.

69 91 **tale**: number.

69 94 **lets**: hinders or keeps.

69 110 **allow'd**: permitted.

69 111 **Of**: by.

69 118 **devoir**: duty.

70 125 **untruth**: unfaithfulness.

70 132 **He is all fault who hath no fault at all**: is this the common verdict? Nearly the same idea is expressed in the following lines from Tennyson's *Maud*, I, ii, ll. 6–7:

> Faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null,
> Dead perfection, no more.

74 269 **glanced at**: spoke of.

74 270 **Suddenly speaking of the wordless man**: not caring to talk of the Queen and himself, Lancelot changes the subject by asking a question about the dumb porter who met him at the gates of Astolat.

75 279 **Badon hill**: Mons Badonicus, or Badbury Rings in Dorsetshire. When, in 520, the Saxons (called in *The Idylls* the "White Horse") were invading England, "the Britons rallied under a new leader, Arthur, and threw back the invaders as they pressed westward through the Dorsetshire wood-lands in a great overthrow at Badbury or Mount Badon." — Green, *History of the English People*, I, 24.

75 280 **rapt**: transported.

75 288 ff. "The first battle in which he [Arthur] was engaged, was at the mouth of the river Gleni. The second, third, fourth, and fifth, were on the river, by the Britons called Duglas, in the region Linius. The sixth, on the river Bassas. The seventh, in the wood Celidon, which the Britons call Cat Coit Celidon. The eighth was near Gurnion castle, where Arthur bore the image of the Holy Virgin, mother of God, upon his shoulders, and through the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the holy Mary, put the Saxons to flight, and pursued them the whole day with great slaughter. The ninth was at the City of Legion, which is called Cair Lion. The tenth was on the banks of the river Trat Treuroit. The eleventh was on the mountain Breguoin, which we call Cat Bregion.

The twelfth was a most severe contest, when Arthur penetrated to the hill of Badon. In this engagement, nine hundred and forty fell by his hand alone, no one but the Lord affording him assistance. In all these engagements the Britons were successful. For no strength can avail against the will of the Almighty." — Nennius, *History of the Britons*, translated by J. A. Giles, "Six Old English Chronicles," Bohn's Antiquarian Library, 408, 409. Giles's notes give the following identifications:

Gleni = Glem, in Lincolnshire, by some.
= probably Glen, in Northumberland.
Duglas = "the little river Dunglas."
Bassas = an isolated rock called "The Bass" in the Frith of Forth. "Some think it is the river Lusas, in Hampshire."
Celidon = "the Caledonian forest, or the forest of Englewood."
Gurnion castle = probably "the Roman station of Garionenni, near Yarmouth, in Norfolk."
Legion = Exeter.
Trat Treuroit = "the Brue, in Somersetshire; or the Ribble, Lancashire."
Cat Bregion = "Cadbury, in Somersetshire; or Edinburgh."
Badon = Bath.

75 297 **wild white Horse**: the White Horse was the emblem of the Saxon invaders.

> Tamper'd with the Lords of the White Horse,
> Heathen, the brood by Hengist left.
>
> *Guinevere*, ll. 15–16

76 314 **the fire of God**: King Arthur was God's champion.

> 'Sir and my liege,' he [Lancelot] cried, 'the fire of God
> Descends upon thee in the battle-field.'
>
> *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 127–128

76 338 **rathe**: early.

77 357 **braved**: set at defiance.

79 422 **Pendragon**: at the moment when King Aurelius died, there appeared to Uther "a star of wonderful magnitude and brightness, darting forth a ray, at the end of which was a globe of fire in form of a dragon, out of whose mouth issued forth two rays; one of which seemed to stretch out itself beyond the extent of Gaul, the other towards the Irish Sea, and ended in seven lesser rays." Uther, the King's brother, in alarm consulted Merlin as to the meaning of the portent. He answered, "You shall be king of all Britain. For the star, and the fiery dragon under it, signifies yourself, and the ray extending towards the

Gallic coast, portends that you shall have a most potent son, to whose power all those kingdoms shall be subject over which the ray reaches." When Uther became king, "remembering the explanation which Merlin had made of the star above-mentioned, [he] commanded two dragons to be made of gold, in likeness of the dragon which he had seen at the ray of the star. . . . From this time, therefore, he was called Uther Pendragon, which in the British tongue signifies the dragon's head."—Geoffrey of Monmouth, *British History*, translated by J. A. Giles, "Six Old English Chronicles," Bohn's Antiquarian Library, 219–221.

79 423 **mysteriously**: referring to the mystery of King Arthur's birth.

80 446 **crescent**: in the first quarter; that is, in the period of promise.

83 548 **restless heart**: the changing lights reflected from the diamond gave it the restless appearance.

83 552 **In the mid might and flourish of his May**: at the height of his power.

83 554 **Geraint**:

> The brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's court,
> A tributary prince of Devon, one
> Of that great Order of the Table Round.
>
> *The Marriage of Geraint*, ll. 1–3

85 567 **tarriance**: delay or lingering.

86 592 **So fine a fear**: note the sarcasm.

86 653 **hern**: heron. — **slipt**: loosened. In the practice of falconry the hunter "loosened" the falcon that he might pursue and catch the heron.

88 715 **strokes of the blood**: pulse beats.

89 717 **shook his hair**: Sir Gawain, the courteous nephew of the King, was given similar characteristics in *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 319–321.

91 798 **His own far blood**: his relatives, distantly removed.

93 871 **honor**, etc.: note the antithesis.

94 883 **rough sickness**: delirium. See ll. 849, 850.

94 905 **victim's flowers before he fall**: she is comparing herself to the animal intended for sacrifice. The ancients decorated such animals with garlands.

96 953 **half my realm beyond the seas**: "But to say the sooth, Sir Launcelot and his nephews were lords of all France, and of all the lands that longed unto France." — Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, XX, xviii.

98 1015 **Hark the Phantom of the house**: the "banshee" of the house of Astolat. In Ireland and in some parts of Scotland "the *banshee* is a species of aristocratic fairy, who, in the shape of a little hideous old

woman, has been known to appear, and heard to sing in a mournful supernatural voice under the windows of great houses, to warn the family that some of them were soon to die." — Century Dictionary.

101 1092 **ghostly man**: priest.

103 1170 **oriel**: a room that projects out from the wall of a house. It was formerly used as a boudoir. — **summer side**: southern side.

103 1178 **tawnier than her cygnet's**: the down of the young swan is dark or tan colored. Lancelot says that the swan's neck, compared with the Queen's, seems darker than her cygnet's.

106 1265 **sometime**: formerly.

108 1311 **Estate**: as a transitive verb this word is rare in modern usage (Murray's Dictionary).

108 1316 **worship**: honor.

108 1318 **worshipfully**: honorably.

108 1319 **that shrine which then in all the realm was richest**: Westminster Abbey.

109 1346 **affiance**: trust.

109 1354 **homeless**: loneliness caused by the lack of home ties.

111 1399 **king's son**: Lancelot was the son of Ban, king of Brittany

111 1418 **he should die a holy man**: when Arthur discovered the guilt of Lancelot and the Queen, he decreed that Guinevere should be burned at the stake. Lancelot rescued her and took her to his castle, Joyous Gard. There he was besieged by Arthur and Gawain. The Pope, interfering, brought about a peace and the return of Guinevere to Arthur's court. Lancelot returned to his estate beyond the seas. Arthur followed and made war against him, besieging him in his home castle. The King was called home by the rebellion of Modred, who desired to overthrow Arthur and become king. After Arthur's death, according to Malory, Guinevere retired to the nunnery at Almesbury (Amesbury). Lancelot sought her and found her there, but she, refusing to go with him, made him promise never again to see her face. Having promised, he departed and "rode all that day and all that night in a forest, weeping." At last he came to a hermitage and a chapel, where dwelt the Bishop of Canterbury and the knight, Sir Bedivere. Lancelot's request to be received as a brother of the order was granted; so he put on the habit and served God with prayers and fastings. Later he learned of the Queen's death. After that, refusing food, he soon died. His body was, by his request, taken to castle Joyous Gard and laid to rest in the body of the choir (*Le Morte Darthur*, XX and XXI).

THE HOLY GRAIL

112 2 **Sir Percivale:** in *Lancelot and Elaine* he is called the meek Sir Percivale. "It is Perceval . . . who is the central figure of the best-known versions of the story [of the Holy Grail], as, for example, the *Conte del Graal*, the Welsh *Peredur* [searcher for the basin], and Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*" (Jones, *King Arthur in History and Legend*, p. 107). Wagner's opera *Parsifal* should be added.

112 4 **silent life:** that of the monastery. Peculiar as it seems it was the common practice in the days of chivalry for a knight to end his days in a monastery, in order to "die a holy man."

112 5 **cowl:** a monk's hood.

112 13 **world-old yew-tree:** the yew tree "attains a great age, at least 300 or 400 years." — Chambers.

112 14 **cloisters:** covered passages or walks running around the walls of certain portions of monastic buildings.

112 15 **That puff'd the swaying branches into smoke:** this smoke was the pollen from the yew.

112 21 **beyond the pale:** outside of the monastery grounds.

112 22–23 **such a courtesy spake thro' the limbs:** Sir Percivale's bearing showed courtly training.

112–113 25–27 **Stamp'd with the image of the King:** the knights were stamped with the image of the king, as coins are stamped with impressions. Nevertheless, the coins are not of exactly the same value, though made of the same metal and stamped with the same impression, because some are "light," i.e. light weight.

113 30 **'Nay,' said the knight:** for an account of Sir Percivale's temptation, see *Merlin and Vivien* and Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, XIV, viii, ix, x.

113 31 **the Holy Grail:** this was commonly supposed to be the cup of the Last Supper, which Pilate gave to Joseph, "a rich man of Arimathæa," and in which Joseph collected the blood of the crucified Saviour. He was then supposed to have brought it to Glastonbury, England, where it remained until the wickedness of the times caused it to depart.

113 38 **green:** like a thrifty plant.

113 41 **refectory:** the dining room of a monastery.

113 48 **Aromat:** Arimathæa.

113 49 ff. **when the dead went Wandering o'er Moriah:** Moriah was a mountain. The reference is to Matthew xxvii, 52–53: "And the graves

were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city . . ."

113 51 **Arimathæan Joseph:**

> And finds himself descended from the Saint
> Arimathæan Joseph; him who first
> Brought the great faith to Britain over seas.
> *Balin and Balan*, ll. 98–100
>
> Show'd us . . .
> Thorns of the crown and shivers of the cross,
> And therewithal (for thus he told us) brought
> By holy Joseph hither, that same spear
> Wherewith the Roman pierced the side of Christ.
> *Balin and Balan*, ll. 106–111
>
> With holy Joseph's legend, on his right
> . . . and the walls
> Of that low church he built at Glastonbury.
> *Balin and Balan*, ll. 358, 361–362

113 52 **To Glastonbury, where the winter thorn:** "Glastonbury, . . . an ancient town, renowned in fable as the spot where Joseph of Arimathæa founded the first Christian church in England, and as the Isle of Avalon, where King Arthur and Queen Guinevere were buried. In sober fact *Glastonbury Abbey* can trace its foundation back to the 6th cent. and is 'the one great institution which bore up untouched through the storm of English Conquest, the one great tie which binds our race to the race which went before us, and which binds the church of the last 1300 years to the earlier days of Christianity in Britain' (Freeman). . . . The site of the *Glastonbury Thorn*, which sprang miraculously from Joseph of Arimathæa's staff, and always blossomed on Christmas Day, is marked by a stone inscribed 'I. A. *Anno D.* XXXI.'"— Baedeker, *Great Britain*, p. 130.

113 54 **bode:** abode.

114 61 **Arviragus:** supposed to have been a king of the Britons in the first century A.D.

114 63 **wattles:** plattings of reeds.

114 66 **Mute:** apparently, make no mention of the mystery of the Holy Grail.

114 67 **to-day:** recently.

114 83 **he:** some priest, her father confessor.

116 118 **Rose-red with beatings in it, as if alive:** in ll. 473–476 the Grail is four times called "blood-red," when it appears to Galahad,

while to Lancelot it is only "crimson." The idea of the living qualities of the Grail seems to be the point Tennyson wishes to emphasize; or perhaps this coloring refers to the blood which Joseph caught in it.

116 120 **leaping:** moving in jerks, as the reflection of any liquid moves.

116 135 **Galahad:** "Celibacy had to be shown to be compatible with true knighthood; there was no reason why a knight-errant should make love . . . the sole motive of his quest for adventure. So, we have ultimately created for us the character of Galahad, who

> never felt the kiss of love
> Nor maiden's hand in [his],

and who alone, by virtue of his purity, is allowed to 'find the Holy Grail.'" — Jones, *King Arthur in History and Legend*, pp. 106–107.

> My good blade carves the casques of men,
> My tough lance thrusteth sure,
> My strength is as the strength of ten,
> Because my heart is pure.
>
> Tennyson, *Sir Galahad*, ll. 1–4

116 137 **dubb'd:** conferred knighthood upon him by a stroke of the sword on the shoulder.

116 138 **so young youth:** Galahad was supposed to be but fifteen when he was knighted.

117 165 **he believed in her belief:** see ll. 482–483.

117 168 **ere he past away:** some legends say Merlin sat in the Siege perilous, and thus was "lost himself." Cf. Tennyson's account in *Merlin and Vivien*, ll. 965–968:

> Then, in one moment, she [Vivien] put forth the charm
> Of woven paces and of waving hands,
> And in the hollow oak he lay as dead,
> And lost to life and use and name and fame.

117 170 **scroll:** this, of course, does not mean a parchment, but an "ornament . . . resembling a partly unrolled sheet of paper." — Century.

117 172 **The Siege perilous:** siege is an obsolete or archaic word for "seat," or "throne." "At the left syde of the Emperoures Sege is the Sege of his firste Wif" (Mandeville, *Travels*). Malory explains the Siege perilous in Merlin's words: "Sir, . . . there shall no man sit in those places but they that shall be of most worship. But in the Siege Perilous there shall no man sit therein but one, and if there be any so hardy to do it he shall be destroyed, and he that shall sit there shall

have no fellow." "Tennyson plainly intends the chair to signify the temptations of 'sense.'" — Littledale.

118 183 **riving**: splitting.

118 187 **seven times**: seven has always been used to convey a sense of mystery.

118 197 **A twelvemonth and a day**: compare *Gareth and Lynette*, l. 154.

118 200 **cousin**: kinsman. Bors was Lancelot's nephew.

118 207 **hold**: stronghold.

119 209 **Crying on help**: crying for help.

119 228 **dim rich city**: in l. 342 it is described as "so strange, and rich, and dim." In *Lancelot and Elaine*, it is called "still rich city" (l. 797), again "dim rich city" (l. 842), and "rich city" (l. 886).

119 232 **four great zones**: the outer walls were decorated with pieces of sculpture, arranged in belts about the cylinder-shaped castle. These belts of sculpture represent the progress of man toward civilization, with a promise of a final or angel state.

120 250 **the twelve great battles**: compare note on *Lancelot and Elaine*, ll. 288 ff.

120 252 **mere**: pool.

120 253 **Where Arthur finds**: see *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 285–308. Compare *The Passing of Arthur*, ll. 195–201.

120 254 **counter**: opposite.

120 257 **brand**: sword.

121 273 **Darken'd**: because he knew the knights had taken upon themselves more than they could do.

121 287 See Matthew xi, 7.

121 298 **But ye, that follow but the leader's bell**: sheep follow the bell-wether stupidly, even to destruction.

122 300 **Taliessin**: a Welsh bard who flourished in the sixth century. Arthur speaks as if the poet were living at that time. He says his knights attempt to rival great masters, and being unable to do so, accomplish nothing.

122 310 **sudden heads of violence**: such as the one the king had just been to subdue.

122 312 **White Horse**: see note on *Lancelot and Elaine*, l. 297.

122 319 **wandering fires**: the ignis fatuus; the will-o'-the-wisp; made by the phosphorus in plants and water. Here a metaphor.

122 320 **quagmire**: soft, wet, boggy land that trembles under the foot; a marsh. A metaphor; explain the figure. "Faith! I have followed Cupid's Jack-a-lantern, and find myself in a quagmire at last." — Sheridan, *Rivals*, III. iv.

123 347 **crazy walls:** weak, tottering walls.

123 350 **On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan:** all heraldic devices. — **wyvern** (or *wivern*): a monster whose fore part is that of a dragon with its fore legs and wings, while the hinder part has the form of a serpent with a barbed tail. — **griffin:** "an imaginary animal supposed . . . to combine the head, front, and wings of an eagle with the body and hind quarters of a lion." — Century.

123 358 **Gate of the three Queens:** see *Gareth and Lynette*, ll. 209–231.

123 361 Notice how Sir Percivale passes from a feeling of pride to one of humility and doubt and gloom.

124 381 **crisping:** crimping, twisting, rippling.

125 422–423 **the spires prick'd with incredible pinnacles into heaven:** the turrets were of such an unbelievable height that they seemed to touch heaven.

126 427 **clomb:** climbed. "Clomb" is obsolete.

126 449 **she:** humility.

126 453 **gray-hair'd wisdom of the east:** the three Wise Men who visited the infant Saviour on the night of his birth. See Matthew ii.

127 462 **the sacring of the mass:** the consecrating of the bread and wine by the priest before mass. "And then the bishop made semblaunt as though he would have gone to the sacring of the mass. And then he took an ubblie which was made in likeness of bread. And at the lifting up there came a figure in likeness of a child, and the visage was as red and as bright as any fire, and smote himself into the bread, so that they all saw it, that the bread was formed of a fleshly man; and then he put it into the Holy Vessel again." — Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, XVII, xx.

128 489 **There rose a hill:** "In conception, in invention, in description of invented landscape, this passing of Galahad is splendidly written. It is too long to quote in full, too knit together to be spoiled by extracts, and too poetic to criticise. It is its own best criticism.

"This great and lofty vision of the glory of the pure spiritual life, refined and thrilled by heavenly holiness into pure vision with the world beyond the sense, and needing no death to enter into the perfect life, is done as no one has done this kind of work since Dante." — Stopford Brooke, *Tennyson: His Art and Relation to Modern Life*, p. 327.

128 508 **blazed:** roared, blared, with the volume of thunder; perhaps accompanied with flashes of lightning. See ll. 516 and 523, below.

128 509 **Shoutings of all the sons of God:** "and all the sons of God shouted for joy." — Job xxxviii, 7.

129 526 **the spiritual city:** the New Jerusalem (Revelation xxi, 10).

129 541 **win:** attract.

129 545 **but on**: only in. — **breviary**: a book containing the daily offices which all official churchmen are bound to read. Note the Monk's lack of education.

129 547 **little thorpe**: hamlet, village.

130 558 **market-cross**: "In mediæval times most market-towns in England and Scotland, and in many parts of the continent, had a market-cross, sometimes forming a monument of considerable size and elaborate architecture." — Century.

130 559 **small man**: because of his narrow life.

130 569 **eft**: a newt, any small lizard.

131 600 **The heads of all her people**: all her head people.

131 612 **yule**: December or Christmas. Here by metonymy the word means "yule log" or "Christmas fire." The custom of burning the great yule log at Christmas time was very common.

131–2 612–618 **yule is cold**: after the great yule fire died down the people were content "to sit by little fires." Sir Percivale was as a "yule fire" to the Monk "where all the brethren are so hard."

132 628 **badger**: an animal that burrows in the ground.

132 633 **pelican**: a bird that lives in the desert. According to the myth, when its young are famishing, the parent bird opens its breast and feeds its brood on its own blood. Sir Bors wore the image of the bird as a crest on his helmet. In heraldry it symbolized charity.

132 639 **maddening what he rode**: spurring his horse to a frenzy.

132 643 **a lion in the way**: his love for the Queen.

133 646 **former madness**: Lancelot had loved Queen Elaine, daughter of King Pelles (not Elaine of Astolat). Guinevere, learning of this love affair, in a fit of jealousy ordered the knight from court. For two years he wandered in a fit of madness, and was finally cured by the Grail. — Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, XI and XII.

133 661 **Paynim**: a remnant of the Britons not converted to Christianity; followers of the Druids. — **circles**: here follows a description of a Druidic place of worship, like Stonehenge in the Arthurian region — an altar surrounded by a circle or by circles of long stones pitched (or erected) on end, pointing skyward.

133 667 **he**: the sun. Tennyson represents these pagans as worshipers of the sun. They also understood the "wanderings of the stars."

134 679 **scud**: light, vapory clouds driven rapidly through the sky.

134 681 **seven clear stars**: the Great Bear, or Big Dipper.

135 714 **heaps of ruin**: see l. 726, below. The enumerated articles following were probably carved decorations torn from the buildings by

the "gale." — **unicorns**: traditional or fabulous animals, with a single long horn.

135 715 **basilisks**: fabulous monsters formerly believed to exist, variously regarded as a kind of serpent, lizard, or dragon, and sometimes identified with the cockatrice. — **cockatrices**: fabulous monsters, "reputed to be hatched by a serpent from a cock's egg, represented as possessing characters belonging to both animals, and supposed to have the power of killing by the glance of its eye; a basilisk. This monster occurs in heraldry having the head, legs, and feet of the cock, a serpent's body and tail, and dragon wings." — Century.

135 716 **talbots**: a kind of hound, probably the oldest of the slow-hounds, in heraldry generally considered as a mastiff, represented with hanging ears, and tail somewhat long and curled over the back.

135 722 **bade me hail**: saluted me at meeting. Compare the expression "bid you a good day."

135 737 **Gawain**: see note on *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 319.

136 759–760 **him of Cana . . . best until the last**: see St. John ii, 10.

138 810 **Carbonek**: a castle mentioned several times by Malory in connection with the Grail. It is said that the castle was built for the Holy Grail. When Lancelot recovers from his madness he asks from those about him: "Therefore, sirs, for God's love tell me where I am. Then said they all that he was in the castle of Carbonek." — Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, XVII, xvi.

139 835 **crannies**: small openings.

139 840 **seventimes-heated furnace**: see Daniel iii, 19. See note on l. 187, above.

139 844 **All pall'd in crimson samite**: "The Grail is clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud when Galahad sees it, but is all palled in crimson samite before the eyes of Lancelot; the sinless and sinful visions differ, but that Lancelot sees it, even shrouded in red, may be a sign that he shall die a holy man; that though his sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow; though they be red as crimson, they shall be as wool." — Littledale, quoted by French.

139 862 **deafer than the blue-eyed cat**: "Thus cats which are entirely white and have blue eyes are generally deaf; but it has been lately stated by Mr. Tait that this is confined to the males." — Darwin, *Origin of Species*, I, 9.

140–141 893–898 King Arthur does not seem to approve the courses taken by Sir Galahad and Sir Percivale after they had seen the Grail. His ideal life was a life of usefulness.

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

142 1 **Sir Bedivere:**

> the first of all his knights
> Knighted by Arthur at his crowning.
> *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 173–174

143 28 **I pass but shall not die:** Merlin had prophesied that Arthur should not die (*The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 418–423).

143 30–31 **Gawain kill'd in Lancelot's war:** according to Malory, while Arthur was making war against Lancelot, Gawain received a wound at Lancelot's hand which healed. Then came news that Modred, having raised a rebellion, had proclaimed himself king. Thereupon Arthur and Gawain returned to England, met Modred at Dover, and overcame him in battle. After the battle, Gawain was found unconscious in a boat. He had been injured in the old wound made by Lancelot. When Arthur found him, he regained consciousness long enough to write a letter to Lancelot urging him to come to Arthur's aid. "And so at the hour of noon, Sir Gawain yielded up the spirit. And then the king let inter him in a chapel within Dover castle, and there yet all men may see the skull of him, and the same wound is seen that Sir Lancelot gave him in battle." — Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, XXI, ii.

143 35 **isle of rest:** "the island-valley of Avilion," l. 427.

144 77 **Almesbury:** the Queen (according to Tennyson) fled to the nunnery at Almesbury. Hither the King followed her. When she heard his step ring along the gallery leading to her cell, she fell from off her seat

> And grovell'd with her face against the floor.
> *Guinevere*, l. 412

The King forgave her and blest her. After he went away the nuns

> took her to themselves; and she
> Still hoping, fearing, 'is it yet too late?'
> Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess died.
> Then she, for her good deeds and her pure life,
> And for the power of ministration in her,
> And likewise for the high rank she had borne,
> Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess, lived
> For three brief years, and there, an Abbess, past
> To where beyond these voices there is peace.
> *Guinevere* ll. 684–692

146 135 **The voice,** etc.: "The ocean has frequently been used in literature as a symbol of Time and Eternity." — Rowe.

146 139–141 **voice that shakes the world, and wastes the narrow realm . . . and beats,** etc.: the sound of the ocean beating on the shore and wearing it away.

147 160 **purport:** purpose.

147 177 **chancel:** "the eastern and most sacred portion of a church." — Rowe.

147 180 **water:** lake.

148 182 **unsolders:** dissolves.

148 211 **hest:** command.

149 215 **mighty bones:** "The bones of the Danish invaders heaped up in part of the church building at Hythe are abnormally large-sized, and seem to show that 'there were giants in those days.'" — Rowe.

150 243 **fëalty:** fidelity to a lord.

150 248 **lief:** beloved.

150 272 **maiden of the Lake:** see *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 282–293.

152 307 **northern morn:** the Aurora Borealis.

152 308 **moving isles of winter:** blocks of ice floating in the northern sea; icebergs.

154 366 **Three Queens:** see *The Coming of Arthur*, ll. 275–278.

154 383 **greaves:** the part of the armor that protected the front of the leg between the knee and the foot. — **cuisses:** armor for the thighs.

155 401 **holy Elders:** the three Wise Men, who, guided by the star, came to the child Christ, bringing gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. See Matthew ii, 11.

155 403 **image of the mighty world:** "Merlin made the Round Table in tokening of the roundness of the world, for by the Round Table is the world signified by right." — Malory, *Le Morte Darthur*, XIV, ii.

155 408 This line is quoted from *The Coming of Arthur*, l. 508.

156 435 **fluting a wild carol ere her death:** "The musical note of swans hath been commended, and that they sing most sweetly before their death" (Sir Thomas Browne, *Works*, II, 517, London, 1836). This belief, that formerly was quite common, has long since been exploded.

156 445 **From the great deep to the great deep he goes:** this is a verse from one of Merlin's "riddling triplets" (*The Coming of Arthur*, l. 410).